

Saturday, October 8, 2011

US tactical nuclear weapons have always been intended primarily—almost exclusively—for first use, for initiating nuclear attacks as an escalation of a conventional conflict.

US strategic weapons have always been intended primarily for a first strike against the Soviet Union, now Russia.

The actual likelihood of their use in a second strike retaliating to a successful Soviet or Russian surprise attack has always been negligible: though the illusionary prospect of such a possibility has been magnified at times, for reasons of enlarging the military budget and service shares of it and weapons development and production.

Less unlikely (since perhaps 1964) has been a possible “preemptive” strike based on warning of an imminent Soviet attack, probably mistaken warning (which has frequently occurred) though possibly not, in which case the Soviet attack would almost surely have been motivated by a decision to “preempt” a US first strike that Soviet leaders believed—rightly or wrongly—almost certainly imminent.

If their belief was correct, it would be because, in a limited conflict, the US was carrying out its recurrent threats to escalate to a first strike. (It would not be because the US was conducting a surprise preventive war, which is no more likely than a Soviet preventive attack—not in expectation of imminent attack by the adversary).

If it was false, the belief would still reflect the frequent US threats and the constant readiness to carry them out. In other words, it is those US first-strike threats and readiness that make possible, for preemptive reasons—possibly mistaken-- a Soviet/Russian first strike that would otherwise be almost unthinkable for Soviet leaders to contemplate or even prepare for.

The threat of first-use of tactical weapons is, obviously, most credible against an adversary that does not have nuclear weapons. Yet it was made initially (except perhaps for Iran in 1946) and for the rest of the Cold War against the prospect of a conventional invasion of Western Europe (or siege of Berlin) by the Soviet Union, which has been a nuclear state since 1949. The threat to meet such an attack with US nuclear weapons (tactical or strategic) could be credible (and acceptable to the Europeans) only if the US had a basis for confidence that the Soviets would not respond with nuclear retaliation, which would devastate those parts of Europe that were not destroyed by the initial US attacks. US strategic weapons capable of disarming Soviet strategic weapons and destroying its society were meant to provide that confidence; they were to deter the Soviets from responding to US first-use in Europe by the credible threat

[Well, no: the Ike threat was first-strike from the beginning. Limiting a war that involved US nuclear attacks on Soviet troops was never really feasible, or even thought to be so by officials, military or civilian (maybe some academics). Flexible response came later: too



late for the threat of US escalation to first-strike to be more than a hoax, though still probably credible enough, as a hoax, to deter the initial invasion. Or should have been; but see McCwire!) (Flexible response" was basically crazy, a crazy policy based on crazy premises; But so was a SIOP response to an attack on Europe, by that time! The mid-Sixties should have led to a totally different arrangement, for Europe, when damage-limiting became infeasible.) (FU could still have worked, backed by a FS hoax, against non-Soviet forces.)

(Before that, the US FS policy meant sacrificing Europe, but not, consciously, the US too! It implied ruthlessness, but not conscious US suicide: though it would have been suicidal, unknown to the US; SAC was a Domsday Machine, without using cobalt bombs or igniting the atmosphere; by igniting the local tinder in simultaneous, nationwide attacks (Tokyo firestorms—lofting soot dust and smoke into the stratosphere—simultaneously on all 64 cities...) (firebombs simultaneously over a large area harnessed the wind; TN weapons simultaneously harnessed wind and smoke). (McN and JFK did think as if the world would be destroyed, realistically though without evidential basis at that time. Nixon, et al, did not.)

Moreover, virtually all the other potential targets for US tactical weapons during the Cold War—though they were themselves non-nuclear weapons states—were allies or clients of the Soviet Union or China. (China acquired nuclear weapons soon after ceasing to be an ally of the Soviet Union itself; and for most of the interval in-between, from 1959-64, it was misperceived by American leaders as being still part of the "Sino-Soviet Bloc," protected by a Soviet "umbrella"). Thus American leaders faced at least a possibility that the Soviets would respond to a US first-use of nuclear weapons against their ally with their own retaliatory "second-use" of nuclear weapons, either in the same region or elsewhere.

US foreign policy and nuclear policy sought to prevent the Soviets from extending such a "nuclear umbrella" over their allies and clients in the Third World: primarily those bordering the "Sino-Soviet Bloc" such as Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, North and South Vietnam), North Korea. (Their own troops in Iran? Or the Middle East?)

By JFK odds, the risk of nuclear war came from the Soviets creating a situation in which the US could avoid defeat only by initiating FU against Soviet troops. He thought (wrongly!) that there was a 1/3 to 1/2 chance that they would do **that**, in the face of US moves against Cuba (blockade, attack, invasion).

The Soviets needed no FU or FS threats! (exception! Cuba! Imitation of US!) Nor FS threats to back them up, except for preemptive threat (after 1964—when no long much needed, given its second-strike threat; i.e., it didn't "need" a preemptive threat, which was worthless for damage-limiting anyway! The threat was real, and supported the US escalatory and preemptive threats, endangering the SU; it was dangerously mistaken for Brezhnev and the Soviet military to "learn" from C-II that they needed a force modeled on the US, to avoid being forced to back down ever again. (The real lesson was, not to get into a position from which they would have to back down: e.g.,



Berlin. We **were** able to keep Berlin; but for that matter, they were able to keep Cuba—even without a FU threat. Cuba had a big self-defense capability, enough to hold off even Reagan/Haig...after Vietnam, when we understood guerrilla war! Vietnam protected Cuba; the Bay of Pigs protected Laos, but not Cuba or (given “success in Cuba) Vietnam.

No one else has had a FS threat (against a major nuclear power).

But a number have needed and used FU threats (against superior conventional forces). US; (UK vs. Argentine sub in Falklands!); Israel; Pakistan; North Korea (not essential);

US is the one that plans and carries out interventions thousands of miles from its shores, facing locally superior conventional forces (Berlin, China/Korea, the offshore islands, Vietnam, Laos, possibly Iran, the ME, possibly Syria 1970, Iraq/Lebanon 1958). Except perhaps for the latter, a FS capability was helpful (or necessary—at least, the appearance of one, a façade, a possible basis for US over-optimism (of the kind the JCS did have in 1962, the time of its greatest advantage: still over-optimistic about the threat to Europe)—to deter Soviet second-use retaliation or from considering matching our escalation.



Monday, October 3, 2011

\Cuba II\DE notes 10-3-11 The Strangelove Perplex

In proposing to Khrushchev that he launch a preemptive strike if and when Cuba were invaded, Castro believed that the Soviets had at least several hundred ICBMs: in other words, that he would do very much better with a first strike than if he were struck first.

Here, Khrushchev's secrecy about the actual balance did not serve him well with his ally. Castro said in the Havana conference that if he had known the actual balance in 1962, he would have cautioned against, or rejected, the offer of missiles; presumably on the grounds that the US was too likely to attack them (even if they were installed as a fait accompli. By the way, were any Cubans consulted by Biruzayov, or other Soviets, as to whether the missile installation could really be concealed: "by Cuban palm trees"?)

But there is a paradox here. If Castro really thought that the Soviets had a superiority in missiles (as he says: he said he knew the overall balance was different, considering US bombers and overseas bases) why did he think that installing them in Cuba would help the world socialist cause, let alone believe that they were necessary to the Soviets? (Obviously, Khrushchev did not tell him the real situation, which would be significantly transformed by moving MRBMs to Cuba).

Moreover, giving Cuba only tactical nuclear missiles and warheads would be a much more plausible, and quite sufficient, deterrent against invasion—**assuming** they were revealed! Was there any consideration, either by Castro or the Soviets, of doing that? (Apparently the tactical missiles were initially considered only because they could be sent to Cuba faster, by air, in order to forestall an imminent invasion; then, for logistical reasons, they were sent along with the MRBMs. That does suggest that Khrushchev was thinking mainly, or at least as much, about changing the strategic balance as about defending Cuba. The latter should have suggested the tactical missiles from the start).

Still, one of the two main motives Khrushchev had for giving deploying any military forces to Cuba was to deter a US invasion. Yet the pattern of what he did do and what he chose not to reveal raises the paradoxical Strangelove Perplex:

(1) the presence of the tactical missiles, and (2) the presence of the warheads before the blockade took hold, was **never** revealed by Khrushchev (let alone (3) the still more deterrent "possibility" that they were under local control: which was actually the case of the original orders, before Kennedy's speech) during the crisis, or by the Soviets for thirty years!

The same applies (4) to the presence of the warheads for the MRBMs. Continued secrecy about this, after they arrived, greatly diminished their deterrent value (though the uncertainty about it did preserve considerable deterrence in the eyes of McNamara and JFK; certainty would have deterred almost absolutely, though there still remained



uncertainty about “operational status” of the missiles: how long it would have taken for warheads to be moved to the sites and installed, how long to fuel and fire.

5) control of the Cuban anti-aircraft fire being totally in Castro’s hands, resistant to Khrushchev’s requests.

6) Presence of nuclear torpedos on Soviet submarines! (Causing them to surface by “small hand grenades” was not prudent, actually coming very close to one being fired!) JFK was properly worried about challenging a Soviet sub, “anything but that”; he was right! Yet the ExComm people claimed they knew the Navy was forcing them to surface by “practice depth charges”! Actually, they had to come up anyway, to charge their batteries; it wasn’t necessary to knock them about!

(7) Castro did appear to Khrushchev to be mad! (As well as his own military! The ExComm **did** imagine—mistakenly—that K was under heavy pressure from “hardliners” in his own Politburo; they thought, quite wrongly, that was the explanation for the “change” and “inconsistency” between the Oct. 26 and Oct. 27 letters (both of which were really from K personally, but with the knowledge of the Politburo). Thus, they were already giving credit to K for being somewhat out of control, for Soviet policy being “mad.”

(That was a major reason for JFK believing that K would surely move on Berlin or Turkey if the US attacked Cuba. LeMay and Dillon didn’t believe it, in view of US superiority—just as I didn’t think K would even challenge us to attack rather than to accept our demand (our “offer” of not destroying his goddamn missiles! We were right about K’s own calculations and inclinations! But wrong about his degree of control over his own officers (MRBM and tac nucs), his own prudence in deploying tac nucs and warheads (CIA got that wrong in the first place! Less so, Anderson, Nitze, McCone—who knew about Mongoose, which is left out not only of ExComm discussions but of memoirs (DOES RFK TALK ABOUT THIS?! WHICH HE WAS IN CHARGE OF! TAYLOR? BUNDY?—IN HIS ACCOUNT OF THE CRISIS?) HOW DO SORENSEN AND SCHLESINGER DEAL WITH MONGOOSE? OR INVASION PLANS? (DID THEY EVEN KNOW? TALK TO HERSHBERG.)

So there was some false, and unintended, pressure of “madman” pressure in Moscow working on the US. But they were unaware of the real madman, Castro (who was acting in ignorance of the real strategic balance, and of Khrushchev’s actual prudence, and relative unconcern for the Cuban interests as the crisis heated up). That did work on Khrushchev, however; especially because he actually believed that Castro had managed to give orders to, or influenced, his own SAM commander in shooting down the U-2 (as well as firing AA). (He accused Castro of this in a letter to him of Oct. 28). But Dobrynin could have warned RFK about this (in particular, the AA, even the U-2!) including the possibility—which must have worried Khrushchev—that Castro might even achieve control over one or more of the MRBMs—which he did surround for some days after Oct. 28! An attack on the Il-28s—which the JCS wanted, and perhaps even the ExComm at some point (without even knowing that they had nuclear warheads! Another



secret!)—might have entailed a real danger of Castro's doing this! In other words, K knew that it was far more dangerous for the US to be threatening Castro or considering an attack—while the warheads were on the island, **which the US still didn't know!**

8) The Russian troops in Cuba! In November, believed to be 16,000; revised up to 22,000 in 1963 (they weren't seen coming out, any more than going in?!) (3000 remained). But they had 42,000 (revealed at the 1989 Moscow conference; so estimates of US casualties in invasion—Garthoff said 18,000 cas.—were based on totally false estimate that only 10,000 to 12,000 troops (McNamara, in Moscow) would be faced!) Again, this remained secret not only during the crisis but for 27 years afterward!

Not supporting my thesis that Khrushchev was worried above all by the prospect of a Cuban shootdown of a US recon plane:

There's no explicit mention of this by the Soviets or their files. (This doesn't say much, considering the fragmentary nature of our information, but it would be stronger evidence if there were mention of it: which may exist somewhere).

K seems to have been ready to accept the October 27 message from JFK—just a no-invasion pledge, no deal on Turkey-- even before hearing of the two ultimatums from RFK (although the first hardly needed to be said; they must have worried about an attack from the moment they heard about the U-2: which was when, exactly?). K did know the Cubans were firing: when, exactly? Did they hear about any fire hitting the recon planes? Did this actually happen, or not? (Possibly not.)

Thus, the covert deal offered by RFK was just a "sweetener" (for the Politburo), not critical (and not much of a sweetener). The ultimatum did offer a time interval for more bargaining (on Turkey: or conceivably, as Castro complained, for more concessions on Cuba!): requiring an answer "by the next day: presumably 24 hours" that gave Moscow until about 4AM Monday, Moscow time, about 8PM Sunday DC time (with the attack in 48 hours, 4AM Moscow time Tuesday).

Instead, they felt a need to get an answer to JFK by 5PM Moscow time Sunday, because they mistakenly believed that he was going to announce an attack then, 9AM DC time. That would have meant that JFK was jumping the gun on his own (secret) ultimatum, announcing an attack about 12 hours after RFK spoke to Dobrynin rather than 24 or 48 hours. But that wouldn't have been entirely surprising, considering (a) the ultimatum was secret, not public; and (b) RFK had warned Dobrynin that the pressure on JFK from the military was great and increasing and that the situation was getting out of his control (TCS threat!) So JFK could easily have changed his mind and hastened the schedule after RFK's talk.

When exactly, did word of the scheduled JFK speech (actually, a replay of his Oct. 22 speech) reach the Politburo? Was it before or after word of the RFK interview?



It may have been the trigger to the sense of extreme urgency. Note that they were happy that the switch to daylight saving time in the US gave them an extra hour to draft the reply and deliver it to Moscow broadcasting!

The Strangelove Perplex. Castro wanted Soviet troops to remain on the island—he got 3000—as a “tripwire” to assure that an American attack would bring in his unreliable ally. But that would be a deterrent—rather than simply a detonator to nuclear winter—only if the US knew they were there. But that (9) was kept a secret! Did the US know it or not? In any case, when Church revealed it in 1979, as a “combat brigade” (I think he claimed that it was a new introduction) and Carter demanded it be removed. (Was it?)

(Blight and Brenner, 277: Gribkov in 1994: “The Soviets left it in Cuba ‘for symbolic purposes, to show there was a Soviet presence in Cuba,’ he said. [i.e., to get credit with Cuban people that Soviets were an ally?] But according to notes from a conversation between Castro and Khrushchev in 1963, Khrushchev was reluctant to maintain Soviet troops on the island. It was the Cuba leader who asserted that the brigade would serve as a kind of trip-wire to deter U.S. aggression, ‘like the celebrated missiles. So long as they are there,’ Castro remarked, ‘American military circles are convinced that an attack on Cuba would inevitably led to war with the Soviet Union’ (quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, p. 332).

But did the US know they were there?!

Compare the functions of US troops in NATO, with tactical nuclear weapons.

(The question keeps arising in the conferences: did the Soviet weapons have PALs? No. But what did the Soviets ever know, or believe, about the presence of PALs in Europe? And what was the reality?! (OUR Strangelove Perplex!)

The reality is that each side (all sides: Saddam, Castro, Khrushchev and successors, Eisenhower and successors) deploy real “tripwires” to Doomsday Machines (not only rhetorical threats, public commitments, potentially bluffs) whose only **rational, instrumental, non-insane** function can be to **deter** (however recklessly) relatively small-scale attacks: assuming they are made known to the opponent. **Yet they are kept secret from the opponent** (along with one’s own public, legislature and most of the government, and allies, who might object to the risk and immorality).

(It is, in effect, intended as a *Fait Accompli* against one’s own constituents, at the price of deceiving also the opponents, who need to know this if they are to be deterred! I.e., at the price of any benefit from the arrangement, to compensate for the extreme danger it poses (if the non-deterred attack takes place). See Skybolt, where the need for secrecy from the JCS led to deception of the British as well, who were furious at being betrayed. Castro, by the way, had wanted openness about the deployment, or at least, **no lying** to the US, which he seems to have understood was dangerous. (The secrecy might have been necessary, in view of Congressional opinion; but the lying played into the hands of

US hawks, and forced JFK to do “something”, and enabled him to do it, making the deployment look illegal or at least, guilty.)

10.5.11:

The construction of one Doomsday Machine (even though the US didn't understand it to be such, they did know it was a machine for killing about a billion people, in addition to the number that would be killed directly and indirectly by Soviet retaliation: a hundred million in Europe by direct attack (if the wind had not conveyed enough fallout from US attacks to kill them all anyway), millions from attacks on US bases elsewhere, attacks on the US if any, e.g. from submarines) was “mad” to begin with. But its destructive power (and the lack of reasonableness—what's a word for “genuine rationality”? wisdom? Practical, realistic, humane, decent, rationality? (A judgment on values, and realism, and humane concern)—exhibited by its very construction) did undoubtedly have a deterrent effect.

The construction of a second one in the Soviet Union didn't exhibit some higher degree of sanity, either: though it, too, had its deterrent effect, and was basically understood by the US.

Many credit one or both of these with having “kept the peace” for sixty years—“the longest period of peace between great powers in recent history, perhaps forever” (Gwynne Dyer). They even (in ignorance of the near-misses and frequent secret threats, and ignoring the Doomsday potential) regard this as admirable, worthwhile, worthy of being continued (some say, even imitated by others).

(Cirincione: the recent discovery of the ozone and nuclear winter effects of small, regional exchanges, as between India and Pakistan, means that there are not just two Doomsday Machines, but three, four, or more. (India alone? Pakistan alone? Israel alone? France? And if testing spreads H-bombs, and MIRVS...)

But whereas Kahn's Doomsday Machine implied a publicly-known list of triggering, “forbidden” events, to be deterred, the list I've compiled involves **secret** triggers, “**secret crimes**,” (to be “punished” or avenged by killing vast numbers of “innocents”—**secret hostages** to unspecified acts--whose secret tripwire attachments to a Doomsday Machine have no deterrent effects or apparent purposes. (They're like Tinguely's self-destructing machine, only not merely self-destructing.)

Wikipedia: **Auto-destructive art** is a term invented by the artist Gustav Metzger in the early 1960s and put into circulation by his article *Machine, Auto-creative and Auto-destructive Art* in the summer 1962 issue of the journal *Ark*. From 1959, he had made work by spraying acid onto sheets of nylon as a protest against nuclear weapons. The procedure produced rapidly changing shapes before the nylon was all consumed, so the work was simultaneously auto-creative and auto-destructive.

In 1966, Metzger and others organised the Destruction in Art Symposium in London. This was followed by another in New York in 1968. The Symposium was accompanied by public demonstration of Auto-destructive art including the burning of Skoob Towers by John Latham. These were towers of books (skoob



is books in reverse) and Latham's intention was to demonstrate directly his view that Western culture was burned out.

In 1960, the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely made the first of his self-destructive machine sculptures, *Hommage a New York*, which battered itself to pieces in the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Pete Townshend of The Who would later relate destroying his guitar on stage to auto-destructive art. Band member Keith Moon dramatically followed suit by placing explosives into his drums (at some points nearly blowing himself to pieces).<sup>[1]</sup>

Japanese Noise/Performance Art band the Hanatarash would create entire performances out of destroying their sets with power tools and with other non musical instruments, and the sound produced being the focus, essentially producing 'art' based on complete destruction.

His best-known work, a self-destroying sculpture titled *Homage to New York* (1960), only partially self-destructed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, although his later work, *Study for an End of the World No. 2* (1962), detonated successfully in front of an audience gathered in the desert outside Las Vegas.

In Arthur Penn's *Mickey One* (1965) the mime-like Artist (Kamatari Fujiwara) with his self-destructive machine is an obvious Tinguely tribute.

[God as a precursor to Tinguely; or, Tinguely having figured out God's intentions as an artist, God's message, God's art.

What do we learn about the top leaders from the Missile Crisis?

JFK (and McNamara) and Khrushchev were each properly deterred from initiating violence against each other's forces or allies (Cuba, Turkey) by what they saw (a) as a small, but non-zero, chance of unauthorized action by subordinates, their own or the other's, as the process continued; b) a larger, but still small, chance that a Soviet officer in Cuba would launch an MRBM under attack; c) a high likelihood that

5/8/12

(from Questions file)

["It could have been worse:"

K: **announces** tac nucs deployed, with warheads, and 40,000 SU troops, either with delegation or with use "on the table" for K in case of invasion (NATO strategy)

Biggest question: **Why didn't he?** (Instead: the Strangelove Perplex!)

[NOTE: in reality, US had strong reason to fear immediate consequences of invasion in the Caribbean: tac nucs; Soviet troops! And guerrilla war!—not just, or even mainly, "horizontal escalation" to Berlin or Turkey. K had prepared a strong defense, like NATO's, in Cuba itself! **NO ONE in ExComm considered this as a possibility, let alone, a certainty!**

**And K failed to make the US aware of these realities, at any point! (or ever: no "leak" from Cuba or the Soviet Union, even 25 years later in 1987; not until 1992 (or 1990?) in Moscow!** (Without McNamara-Blight conferences, and end of CW, we wouldn't know still! "Lessons" of crisis would be all wrong and dangerously misleading!

As it is, hawks in 1962 were wildly, catastrophically wrong: about consequences of attacking! (Not in Berlin or Turkey, but in Cuba!) **To repeat: *as in the case of the missile gap* (in the other direction) they didn't allow for the actual reality (tac nucs, large Soviet force: prolonged guerrilla war) as a possibility, in their range of possibilities; and the action they proposed would have been catastrophic.**

**(Catastrophic for the world: Cuba, SU, Europe: nuclear winter (including US). K was doubly reckless or irresponsible, in putting the tac nucs and warheads and troops there (aside from the MRBMs), concealing the deployment "all too well," and not ever announcing them! If Castro had shot down more planes on Saturday...**

Note the terrific **intelligence failure** of US in not getting a hint of any of these realities, ever (ever when Soviet troops were removed!)—or for 30 years, when Soviets revealed them after CW. This has never been commented on, or investigated by CIA (which recognized other failures!) (From SI or overhead recon or Soviet or Cuban leaks or informants!)

(Were EXCOMM members culpable in not imagining these possibilities? After all, we knew the FROGS were there, and Il-28s (cruise missiles?): and at least 14,000 troops.

NOTE: In "Dr. Strangelove," the fact that the Soviets hadn't informed us about their Doomsday Machine *made no difference to the outcome*: unless it had been made known



to General Jack D. Ripper and he had believed it, and had thereby chosen not to send the bombers off. He had arranged that the president couldn't call them back, so the fact that the result would be Doomsday didn't affect what the president might or might not have done, whether the president had known about this in advance or not.

On the one hand, Jack Ripper committed suicide anyway during the exercise, so it made no difference to him whether the result would be Doomsday or not. He might not have wanted the world to be destroyed, but since his—and presumably everyone's—vital fluids had already been compromised by the Russkies (as he discovered in the physical act of making love), it might not have mattered to him. And the Russians would be punished, destroyed.

On the other hand, if the president **had** been informed about the Doomsday Machine well in advance of the events in the film, he **might** have fundamentally transformed or scrapped the whole “deterrence” machinery. Or at least, he could have, and should have. (So Ripper wouldn't have the opportunity to execute Plan R). Ha, ha. Fat chance. Neither Reagan—president when nuclear winter was discovered—nor George H.W. Bush, nor Clinton, nor George W. Bush, nor Obama—all of whom have faced that overt challenge, none has taken any account of it.

Every one of the five presidents in the Doomsday Era since 1983 has left open the opportunity to a Jack D. Ripper, or a Buck Turgidsen reacting to a false alarm, to send off the forces and trigger the Machine. Because there would be some domestic opposition to doing otherwise, that might sacrifice some contributions and votes.

NOTE: All the secrets bearing on the existence of a Doomsday Machine (given the discovery of nuclear winter) **have been effectively kept secret** for from 25 to 50 years.

Delegation; the looseness of nuclear controls; the scale of city targeting; cities as FS targets; K's sending tac nucs and warheads; K delegating; K lack of control in Cuba; Guantanamo as target; Dead Hand; frequency of false alarms; Saddam's DM (with Israel);

Secrets can be kept, for a long time. And these are the kinds of secrets, with these implications.

Others, other kinds: readiness of K and of JFK to make major concessions; provocation plans (Northwoods, de Soto); covert ops; invasion plans.

(Trying to understand Cuba-II without knowing of these is like trying to understand the events in the Tonkin Gulf without knowing of 34A or plans for a wider war. Note that the officials—Bundy and McNamara—who deny any intention or plans to invade Cuba are the **same** officials who **two years later were** concealing and denying any intention or plans for invading South Vietnam or bombing the North and who continued to do that until (or even after) the Pentagon Papers came out in 1971. Exactly the same for “provocation.”

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Each was properly afraid of what might happen once lives had been taken on either or both sides. The need to retaliate—an eye for an eye, “plus ten percent” (as Kissinger once put it)—to punish, to avenge, to restore honor and credibility, would soon wrest control of events out of the hands of either of the leaders, creating a dynamic context in which lower-level military commanders and even individual soldiers would make irreversible decisions that would spur the process on.

They were right. The accidental flight of a U-2 three hundred miles into Soviet territory, causing the scrambling of Soviet fighter planes attempting to shoot it down; Castro’s order to his antiaircraft gunners to fire on low-level US recon planes; Cubans’ successful urging of Soviet commanders in Cuba to shoot down the U-2 with a SAM (both of the latter misinterpreted in Washington as deliberate escalations by Khrushchev, a “new pattern” (making it appear unlikely that Khrushchev would remove the missiles, if at all, for anything less than a full public removal of the Turkish missiles, and perhaps more than that: removal of US planes and perhaps all forces from Turkey, perhaps the same for Italy and England: when actually, he was already prepared to accept removal for a simple assurance of no invasion of Cuba...))

The secret trade was not necessary to the deal, by Saturday night (or earlier that day) (though JFK was ready that morning to make a public trade; and had considered it probably necessary since much earlier, perhaps by Oct. 17,

There really **was** a significant risk that the crisis would get out of control, explode

Each of the leaders recognized this.

Each was determined to keep this from happening.

Yet, each kept the tacit “bargaining” (TCS) going, delaying revealing his bottom line (and his determination not to accept undue risk either of loss of control or of the other’s escalation), accepting *some* risk of explosion,



Which risk was actually larger than he realized (though not as large as they pretended to be willing to accept or pose, or as the public imagined)

Their decisions, accepting some risk (which they regarded as small, underestimating it) interacted to create a much larger risk, quite high by Saturday night

Although, on the other hand, each overestimated the other's willingness to risk, and underrated their readiness to compromise. This meant the risk was really less than it might have been, since each really was determined to prevent an explosion.

JFK was secretly making preparations to make concessions to head off an American attack, probably by the next day, which he didn't dare expose to most of his own ExComm; indeed, he might well have feared that if those preparations became known in the Pentagon he would face military insubordination (if not immediately, later) and if they were carried out, impeachment. And Khrushchev, faced with what he knew, better than Kennedy, was the imminence of an American air attack on his forces in Cuba, did move swiftly to withdraw them.

As Stephen Pinker says of the crisis, the world was lucky that two leaders were at the helm who were so determined to resist their own hawks and compromise.

**Yet despite all this**, the world did come within a few feet, on one day, and a few hours on the next, of starting a violent process likely to end in the extinction of the human species and many others.

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10-2-11

Ex-Com as a Big Con: a consensus-building device (e.g. to bring along the republicans, Dillon and McCone, to the blockade); real decisions made by JFK within much smaller groups

Ignorance of ExComm of Mongoose, and of invasion plans; and of PSALM clearance; and of prior consideration of possible missiles.

(McCone knew of Mongoose—hence (?) his expectation of missiles, unlike (?) his intell estimators; but did even he know of invasion plans?

ExComm, in its ignorance, couldn't assess or even conceive of the importance of preventing US invasion as a SU aim, let alone, a or the principal aim. It looked like at least an effort to redress the strategic imbalance; but then, why was it done so covertly? And so urgently? Unless to make immediate use of it, say in Berlin. (Was this a motive at all? Has that ever come out—K intentions wrt Berlin, which he did say secretly he was about to reopen?

F Those in the know about invasion plans, on the other hand, knew that the ExComm as a whole couldn't discuss this and that their corporate advice was worthless, even worse than useless (based on assumption that the SU was being more aggressive than it was.

Wouldn't an air attack inevitably have opened up the question of SU motives and revealed the prior invasion plans? Or not? Would JFK have really minded that coming out (or even Mongoose), since it would answer Republican claims that he was being too passive?

Gribkov: K wasn't thinking about Turkish missiles, as a major consideration (until RFK and Lippmann raised them?! And until he was looking for some face-saving cover for retreating!

It was the tactical weapons—first revealed by Gribkov in Havana in 1992 (30 years later!) that were really addressed to, indeed critical to, defense of Cuba. Yet they weren't "used" as deterrent threats at all, even in the height of the crisis! Did any of the Sovs, starting with K, ever notice or comment on the implications of the FAILURE to disclose them? (Even the MRBMs weren't explicitly admitted until October 28: WHY NOT? Has that ever been explained? )

That meant, like the Doomsday Machine in Strangelove, the "worst of all worlds": a defense/deterrent that wasn't used to deter and would not have deterred, a "defense" that would lead to destruction of Cuba if not of the world (in other words, it should have been a pure bluff even if it was threatened as a deterrent: as TCS believed K would have recognized and acted upon by not sending warheads at all, **just as neither side should**



Tuesday, September 20, 2011  
Odds II

What ended the crisis; and how it might have ended, differently

There is a tendency now to conclude that Kennedy's odds on the likelihood of general war were exaggerated. I, on the contrary, have come to believe that Kennedy's odds were realistic<sup>1</sup>, and that my own estimate at the time was far too low. My judgment--when I was 31 and had never been in a war--that Khrushchev was sure to back down because of the military odds against him does not look good in the light of events of the last quarter century. Leaders, men of power, challenged to accept a humiliating setback, do not often back down when they "ought" to in terms of an objective appraisal of the odds and the long-range interests of their citizens.

It may well be that John F. Kennedy understood this at the time--for himself as well as for Khrushchev--better than I did, and that that was the basis for his higher estimate of the dangers. The fact that Khrushchev did back down I see as the result of his appreciation of special, threatening circumstances, of which President Kennedy and the ExComm remained largely unaware.

Khrushchev was made aware, by RFK's ultimatum on Saturday night, that as of first light the next morning, he would be out of control of the slide toward nuclear war. The likelihood of nuclear war would depend, in the first instance, on the accuracy of Cuban anti-aircraft gunners, which had been improving during the afternoon of Saturday. If he left the missiles in place throughout Saturday night in Cuba (afternoon and evening in Moscow), he would subsequently be unable to prevent either a likely event Sunday morning--the downing of an American low-level reconnaissance plane by the Cubans—or to reduce decisively the likelihood that it would result in all-out nuclear war. That would follow from the loss of his missiles to American attack, an American invasion of Cuba, the use of Soviet tactical nuclear weapons against the American invasion force (if there had not already been an unauthorized launch of a Soviet MRBM against Florida, under attack), and all-out US nuclear attack on the Soviet Union.

He could prevent this course of events only by ordering the missiles to begin to be dismantled before morning in Cuba and informing the American president of this reliably before American recon planes began flying over Cuba. (JFK had, in fact, cancelled night recon flights Saturday night out of concern that the flares they dropped would be interpreted as an attack, jumping the gun on his 48-hour ultimatum. But morning recon flights were definitely on.)

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<sup>1</sup> Saturday, October 8, 2011: If he thought there was a 1/3 chance or higher that Khrushchev was consciously willing to confront the US with a choice between the SIOP and humiliating defeat, he was wrong; K definitely did not want war, at all, and he didn't want to take a move that have even a moderate risk of all-out war (he foolishly didn't think a tactical nuclear attack on the invasion force risked that!); he never gave much thought to expanding the conflict to Turkey or Berlin, though JFK thought that "certain." BUT he might have been wrong; Gromyko and Dobrynin, quoted by McNamara from the Moscow conference, were sure that the Soviets would have responded militarily elsewhere: which in most cases, would have fulfilled JFK's fears. However, there was at least a 1/3 chance that a US invasion would have evoked a nuclear war **in Cuba**, against the invasion force, possibly or probably escalating to all-out war, something that the Americans gave no thought to at all (except for the possibility of an unauthorized MRBM launch, also possible).



Alternatively, Khrushchev could have considered, at this late moment, informing Kennedy of the facts of the situation which he had so far chosen to conceal. He would have done better to reconsider that concealment as soon as the warheads were in Cuba, by the beginning of the blockade on Wednesday, October 24. But at this point (Sunday morning in Moscow) he could hardly be sure that this message would get through to the president during the night of October 27-28, in DC, or be absorbed and acted on by the president by morning (canceling the recon flights: and probably, any intention of invading or even attacking the missiles).

Would this information have stopped U.S. plans, or hastened them, to attack the SAMs and missiles? That would depend on McNamara's and JFK's concern for unauthorized firing of the Soviet MRBMs under attack. Consider Kennedy's extreme concern, which came through to me Saturday night, that Turks not be able to fire the IRBM if they were under attack. They couldn't be less worried than that about the prospect of a local Soviet initiative, especially if Khrushchev had openly contradicted our earlier assumptions about Soviet caution in deploying warheads abroad. (Twenty years later, Tom Schelling was saying at a conference on the crisis that it was "inconceivable" that Khrushchev would actually have sent the actual warheads to Cuba). It would still have been beyond American imagination in 1962 that he might have delegated control of tactical nuclear missiles to a local commander, or that the shootdown of the U-2 that morning had not been on his orders. Probably he wouldn't have chosen to pass that along, though Schelling would have noted that that information would have been even more effectively deterrent against American attack.

Just the prospect of a local response, against orders, would have prevented an airstrike as well as an invasion, despite objections from the JCS. Yes, Khrushchev would appear reckless and irresponsible to the world (though no more so than NATO nuclear deployments in Europe or Turkey, if Khrushchev had made that point). But he would have won the duel. Either the missiles would have stayed in Cuba or have been traded off publicly for those in Turkey.

(Why didn't he do this earlier, say on Wednesday? The blockade having **failed** to prevent the delivery of nuclear warheads! He had a potential win in his hands. Perhaps he feared that even the threat that tactical nuclear warheads might be used might not deter an American invasion—that his delegation might be challenged and the Americans would demand it be changed, and act on the expectation that it would be (just as RFK demanded that firing on American recon planes, by the Cubans, be stopped).

Still, by Wednesday, or Friday, his position on Cuba was as strong as it would ever be, as proof against American invasion plans or attack as it would be by mid-November. However, he had not foreseen that when he announced his deployment in mid-November he would be facing an American blockade in place and public demands by the president that he remove them; by Wednesday, he was facing an enemy who was pulling on the knot in the rope of war. That's a reason why telling JFK on Saturday night was too late, too risky. But again, why not on Wednesday? What did he have to lose, by telling JFK the real state of affairs? (Did he realize the American uncertainty on this issue—and their total failure to imagine that he had done something he seems to have regarded as natural: provide warheads for FROG missiles (which the Soviets had never done before, with an overseas deployment, as to Egypt), and delegate their use to local commanders (on the fatheaded belief that this would not lead to two-sided nuclear war, whether limited or not, since it didn't affect the American mainland. This was as fatuous as the Kissinger belief that nuclear war in Europe could be limited from destroying Europe entirely or spreading to the Soviet Union and the US.



[Question: DID JFK cancel recon flights Sunday morning, on getting the message from Khrushchev? If not (I would guess not) were they fired on? Did Khrushchev prevail on Castro to order his gunners not to fire? (Had orders to the SAM commanders and MRBM commanders not to fire except on Khrushchev's direct orders been sent AND RECEIVED by Soviets in Cuba by Saturday night? It wasn't clear in Moscow just what had happened about the U-2 shoot-down for hours on Saturday, or even longer. Alexeev seems to have believed it was Cubans who had shot it down for twenty years or more.)

[Note: from the onset of "nuclear plenty" in about 1950/52—**not** 1945-50, when atomic weapons were targeted in planning only on cities—the capability of nuclear weapons to destroy **military** targets, especially those capable of nuclear attack (thus, high-value, and requiring prompt attack)—was exploited by planners. (The nuclear warhead—especially the H-bomb--can promise wide-area attack, destruction of protected underground centers, and very fast attack, possibly by surprise, by ICBMs, thus, preemptive. Prior to the H-bomb, the A-bomb wasn't susceptible to use by ICBMs, except very large ones (the SS-6), so couldn't be so effective in preemption. )

Hyp: that's why SAC was so oriented to fast reaction to an intention and order to attack: for preemption, especially before ICBMs were available with H-bomb warheads; planes could get in first only if they could get into the air very fast on order. That may have been rationalized not by the need for a surprise attack or a preemptive attack, but by "avoiding being destroyed" by enemy first-strike.)

That was especially true of air-bases—hard to destroy with conventional bombs—and underground command and control centers, and targets defended by air defenses (where only a few attacking vehicles or bombs might get through). (Brodie even imagined that H-bombs offered hope of destroying widely-dispersed conventional troops: with air-bursts?) To multiply **land-based** offensive targets is to encourage the enemy to multiply nuclear warheads to be able to destroy them preemptively (vs. a fixed number of cities as targets), enhancing the chance of widespread destruction (even of allies and neutrals) by fallout (and smoke: nuclear winter). And those enemy missiles and warheads, in turn, encourage the multiplication of missiles (land- or sea-based) with which to preemptively destroy **them**: a self-reinforcing process.

Imagine if missiles had remained highly inaccurate, incapable of destroying hardened silos of land-based missiles except by huge multiples of attacking missiles. Thus, targets had remained cities only (and air-bases) and subs in port. And/or only submarine missiles had been deployed, without increases in accuracy. Then nothing but minimum deterrence would have "made sense,"; conceivably a side that could threaten total devastation when the other can threaten only a few cities could still threaten first use backed up by a coercive strategy (if you hit some of our cities, we will utterly annihilate you). But if each can destroy at least a sizeable part (does it really take 1/3 or 1/4 of population? How about Bundy's ten cities, or twenty cities? York's "closer to one than one hundred": 49 at most?

To neutralize the threat of a coercive strategy?

But with increased accuracy, then land-based missiles become “invitations to preempt” for the adversary (and if the adversary has land-based missiles also—as does Russia—then it becomes an invitation to use them preemptively. If the Russians can be expected to keep land-based missiles (because of their problems with sub-based forces: ports, support, reliability, US anti-sub capabilities, communications) then there are two reasons for the US to eliminate its land-based missiles: to discourage Russian preemption, and to remove the chance for US preemption against Russian land-based missiles on a false alarm (assuming only false alarms are at all likely, or even possible). (Assuming US sub warheads are limited in number, if not accuracy and yield, enough to eliminate a threat to Russian land-based missiles; otherwise they could be tempted to preempt on a false alarm, and the Russians could be tempted to preempt, on a false alarm, against US ports, C3, air-bases).

So—the H-bomb encouraged fast-flying ICBMs against SU planes and missiles, despite their inaccuracy. This encouraged a SU ICBM capability, or IRBMs in Cuba! (if threats against Europe weren’t enough! As my Gilpatric speech indicated!!) That would produce instability in crisis. (as well as arms-race instability). But with increased accuracy (which meant A-bomb warheads could be on ICBMs, and still be counter-force), and parity, land-based missiles became both unnecessary and dangerously destabilizing in crisis. With subs available, ...

The optimum-mix force—which allowed for cities to be hit immediately (it said nothing about sequencing, withholding, forces that could be held in reserve, holding cities as hostages: just for forces “large enough” to be capable to hitting both cities (obviously) and military targets—proposed in 1959-60 preceded the demonstration of an effective submarine force, and presumed early Soviet deployment of land-based missiles (as targets, and threats).

Suppose it had been addressed assuming the existence of SU sub forces (when did they come in?), and no or small ICBM forces (the reality, for the next five years): how could it have rationalized the prompt destruction of cities? OR the importance of a preemptive capability (essentially infeasible)?



Sunday, September 18, 2011  
4:37 PM

Notes on Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of a Gamble

(211) Sov generals seemed to think that they could use tac nucs to "complicate" a US landing on Cuba, without war expanding to two-sided nuclear exchange or all-out war! (also, 207)

[As a deterrent, this could have worked; but K made no effort to use it as a deterrent, by revealing it! When did he propose to do this, if ever?! But as a war-fighting device....Jesus Christ!

(212) Ministry of Defense drafted an order delegating decision to Pliyev to use tac nucs "in the event that communications to Moscow were cut and a US-led invasion had begun. The order required two signatures. Malinovsky's deputy, Marsh Zakharov signed in his capacity as army chief of staff, but Malinovsky did not....Khrushchev did not want to lose control over the decision to use nuclear weapons. The document was to sit unsigned in the files until events in Cuba warranted a change." [SO—NO DELEGATION?] [NO: Gribkov explains that Malinovsky simply didn't want to put this in writing; the oral delegation from K remained in force, until Oct. 22.] Sept. 7—K signs off on order to send nuc warheads.

Each side tries to deter the other: without success. On the contrary, the US "deterrent" warnings lead to **speeding up** the process, to present US with a fait accompli before and after the November election. (211): Clearly, K hoped (as I inferred) that JFK would not take action before November 5 (when the deployments would be complete: the IRBM missiles would have arrived), given his not announcing the deployments before the elections. (Didn't he notice that Keating was already announcing leaks of arrival of SU bases, August 31, and that JFK had committed himself on Sept. 4? So K WAS "making trouble" for JFK before the election; a leak to Keating was likely...) [Crazy expectation by K in May-September, then crazy response in September—unless he had taken other steps to deter...which were available, but he didn't use them!]

X C-I had just proved impossible for US to hide, as a covert op. Now SU was deploying missiles to Cuba as a covert op! (With a good deal of success! More than JFK in C-I. Not unlike Barbarossa: JFK's advisors just couldn't believe K would "be a fool.") K cancels sub deployment and base because it would be more difficult to hide.

X 214 Did US ever consider that SU diesel subs would carry a nuclear-tipped torpedo? (Four of them had one each).

X Assass was too "sensitive" in 1962 for the Special Group to discuss! McCone had moral objections! 201

Deterrence:

*to 50 years later...*

Anadyr: to deter US invasion of Cuba.

JFK statement Sept. 4: to deter deployment of offensive missiles, or SU bases, or SU combat troops. (hastens deployment of R-12's—SS-4's, NATO parlance—by two weeks. 216. 1100 nm, one-megaton warhead. 36, plus six decoys (!) It does tell K that his hopeful assumptions that JFK would accept the missiles were in question (or even, unlikely). But he chooses not to change course!

"no change, B"

Cuba implicitly boasts about having nuclear capability, to destroy invasion. (No effect on US). 219-20: OCT. 8, right after arrival of missiles and warheads.

✓ First warheads leave SU on Sept. 17, arrive on the Indigirka on **Oct. 4**: 45 1-MT for R-12s, twelve 2 kt for the Luna tac weapons, six 12;kt for the Il-28 bobbers and 36 12-kt warheads for the cruise FKR missiles. 45,500 kt, over 20 times WWII (217: says, over Germany: no).

Preparations for invasion, to be ready by Oct. 20 (217: they omit McNamara deadline in their account); (not announced to Sovs, for deterrence! However, they assumed it.)

✓ **No wonder the JCS felt so frustrated on Oct. 28; they had been on max readiness for invasion since Oct. 2 order, ready to go on Oct. 20: by coincidence, 6 days after U-2 photographs missiles on Cuba. (But AFTER nuclear warheads have arrived!)**

✓ **219:** Bolshakov always bitter about having been used to deceive RFK: "only weapons of a defensive character." Oct. 4. (Well, "defensive purpose"!

Did K clearly wish and intend that JFK would be deceived, would not see the missiles before the election? Why reassure him, if he wouldn't see them anyway? Was this a "helpful lie," so that JFK could say that he had been deceived, which is why he hadn't denounced the missiles (or "seen them") before the election and taken action? But wasn't his intelligence service likely to see the missiles anyway? What role would deceiving JFK about his intentions play—unless it discouraged JFK from sending planes over the SA-2 missiles? (Which it did, up until...

See K to Udall on Sept. 6: SU would not press on Berlin until after election. "Out of respect for your president, we won't do anything until November." (Meaning, really, won't announce arrival of missiles: like Israel, "we won't introduce nuclear weapons..."; was it meant to suggest, "we won't put missiles in Cuba before November"? He did mention Cuba, and allegation (!) that US was putting nuclear weapons in Japan. (WAS IT?) (See Iwakuni, 1961! "Just recently I was reading that you have placed atomic weapons on Japanese territory, and surely this is not something the Japanese need." 209 (Where did he read that? Speaking of Okinawa?)

don't attack  
SU build-up  
(Rushby  
Zinc)

With Keating speech on Oct. 6 claiming six IRBM sites being prepared in Cuba (WAS he right? How DID he know?), White House was in danger of appearing "incompetent or deceitful" if he turned out to be right.



<sup>3</sup>  
(CF if internal warnings about 9-11 had been leaked to the press beforehand! As it was, the WH is suspected to this day about being either incompetent or deceitful or both.)

X K's deception had made JFK vulnerable to humiliation (almost immediately, in November elections! A certainty...unless he took risky, incalculable (really) action, uncontrollable (really: more than he realized);

<sup>4?</sup>  
Likewise, JFK speech on Sept. 5 meant that K could either accept a short-term humiliating backdown from preparations for the deployment—211 (would it be certain to leak? But it would be known to insiders, in SU and Cuba: humiliating before them; fear of being ousted? As he was.)—or to take a risky gamble.

X 3-28-15 My K/T pattern, choice of gamble to avert an otherwise certain short-run humiliation.

X But also Fait Malaccompli: deception increasing vulnerability of opponent to humiliation, raising chance of an enraged and violent and risky reaction if the project is discovered prematurely (or even, perhaps, if it is not, and is unveiled as a FA). (See Skybolt, SAME YEAR, right after C-II: I study in 1964, along with C-II study; before Tonkin Gulf). See Dom Pol dominant on both sides.

X 230. In recommending full invasion at 11 on Oct. 18 Thursday, **what was JCS assuming** about presence of nuclear warheads? Possibility of firing under attack, whether air attack or invasion? Possibility of tac nucs against invasion?

X 225: on first meeting of XCom on Oct. 16, McN assumes that nuclear warheads might already be present (as they were) and thus that an air attack would be folly! (Yes: does he change either of those assumptions?)

w 2-5-0 On 18<sup>th</sup>, JFK "overruled concerns—especially those expressed by McNamara—that any use of force implied taking the risk of an inadvertent nuclear war. Kennedy doubted that the Soviets would react to a US military strike by launching their Cuba missiles" unless they're going to be using them from every place." He assumed that Moscow controlled the missiles and that the danger of a nuclear accident was low. In Kennedy's mind Berlin was his only Achilles' heel in this crisis. He assumed that the soviets' proportional response would be a similar action against West Berlin. Then what would he do? What could he do?"

[McN was right, JFK wrong. JCS? Taylor? Others? JFK was wrong about Moscow control of any of the missiles; and didn't even know about the FROGS. [Hyp: Castro was especially furious at the removal of the FROGS.] He was wrong that Berlin was the only problem; or that there was a low chance of unauthorized action or inadvertent war (from point of view of Moscow—or US) CHECK EXCOMM TRANSCRIPTS]

<sup>no</sup>  
[Was JFK really undecided about the blockade as late as Saturday morning, Oct. 20, as authors assert? I think he had told RFK to bring them around to that much earlier, Wed. or Thursday morning. What's my source?]

X CIA says on Saturday, Oct. 20, that 8 MRBMs were ready to fire, and "we believe warheads either are or will be available." 235 (next day, JCS confirmed that a strike could not guarantee taking out all op missiles; JFK's doubts about leading with a blockade disappear.)

WH meeting with Gromyko on Oct. 18 successfully deceived Gromyko (and K) that Anadyr had not yet been seen. Oct. 20: "US military adventure against Cuba is almost beyond belief." 237. (Did he consider at all that they might have been fooling him?) The Blockade was a successful F.A.

JFK's:

X X

Sunday, Oct. 21: in talks with Ormsby-Gore and Bartlett JFK reveals that he plans a deal on Turkey to resolve crisis, without an invasion (or air attack). RFK is revealing this at DOJ to brain trust. (Who?) 236-37. (Ref? McN saying this in meeting: Thursday?)

(Had K ever considered such a deal, as outcome of Anadyr? Or was he really focused on Berlin?)

<sup>morning, Moscow</sup> When K thought invasion was likely and imminent—Friday night, Saturday night—he was ready to settle simply for a no-invasion pledge (basically, since Wednesday, if he couldn't do better). ExComm was wrong to think, Saturday morning, after the Oct. 27 (demand for Turkey) that he would not settle for just a no-invasion pledge. (As he basically did; the secret deal on Turkey might have been "welcome" (Fursenko) but it did very little for K: it meant he had lost, not won; it didn't save his job; and he couldn't even afford to let Castro know he had "won" it, the secret deal). <sup>morning Sunday, Moscow</sup>

<sup>the night DC</sup> When he thought invasion was not imminent—Saturday morning, for him—he wanted to look around and see if he could do better. That was the first time—Oct. 27—he had brought up the possibility of a Turkey deal at the Presidium: a "win," snatching victory from jaws of defeat. But after hearing of the Dobrynin talk with Bobby, and Castro's pressure to preempt, etc., he went back to the no-invasion pledge as the deal.

<sup>No. before</sup>  
X The secret Turkey pledge was part of this, but I strongly feel that it was not necessary to K's decision and played **no** role in his decision to move by the next morning in Cuba/DC. He had strong reason to fear an air strike on Sunday, followed by invasion; that was more than sufficient by then (since Wednesday) to cause him to accept JFK's Saturday proposal of a no-invasion pledge as the public deal. The Turkish offer (though the ExComm thought it would be minimally **necessary** to get a deal) was not necessary at all and played no role Sunday noon (Moscow time). <sup>wrong</sup>  
JFK



Yes, it shows that JFK was more willing to be "flexible" and make concessions than he was perceived at the time or for years afterward. In fact, he was a lot more flexible than that; he was determined to avoid an air strike or invasion (fearing a move on Berlin or Turkey—wrongly, unnecessarily—and also a local decision to fire the MRBMs (a valid fear) and he was prepared to concede even an open trade rather than do that. But he had made threats—thinking them safe, in view of his own bottom line, his own determination not to invade or launch an "**unprovoked**" airstrike—of responding to violent "**provocation**," which would have been very hard for him to back off from (a second time!)—except literally at risk of impeachment, certainly of loss of seats in Congress, prestige, and reelection.

(See his Sept. 4 threat about "offensive weapons" (and Soviet combat troops: he didn't even know yet that that had been defied): which he himself, along with McNamara and Sorensen, said he wouldn't have made if he had thought it might be triggered.)

But it wasn't needed—given his threats and the plausibility of his preparations for invasion and the rumors K was getting, and Castro's being out of control (and perhaps Soviet commanders!) (and the willingness of the Presidium to see tac nucs used against an invasion force)—and actually played no role. (It would have if he had acted on his instincts Saturday morning and, against the criticism of his advisors, accepted the Saturday morning proposal, as he was willing to do (**and had probably suggested it to the Soviets: Dobrynin says (Bernstein) that Bobby did this Friday night. (Not in Fursenko). (Why would he have done it in the face of the Oct. 26 letter, Friday? Had Bobby seen this when he talked to Dobrynin, if he did Friday night?)**)

JFK was being pressed—even as late as Sunday, Oct. 28, by LeMay—to attack the missiles as the only way to get them out "before they became operational, with warheads" and the door would be shut on attacking them. (!) Actually, most had become operational by Oct. 22, the day of the speech. If this was a determinative risk, then the door was probably shut by Saturday, while they were still debating the airstrike, or Sunday, when the JCS argued for it. Did LeMay and the JCS really discount this risk altogether? Were they really ready to see Miami, or DC, go?!

But that's why JFK didn't have an excuse for making the blockade a long period (as he seemed to warn in his speech) and prolonged negotiations. Everyone accepted the need to "stop the construction of the bases" (the IRBM sites were not yet ready), and they were still uncertain about the warheads. (Actually, they were all there. **Why did not K announce this?** (Castro asked, "Why do the Soviets insist on denying the existence of the missiles?" 269). He asked Alekseev, Friday, Oct. 26 (before K's letter?: K seemed to think it was a concession, a necessary one, to admit this in his letter. Castro saw this as a failure to use deterrence, to show Soviet commitment to Cuba, and to show it was a superpower crisis, not just a US/Cuban confrontation. (He wanted K to say that missiles were under Soviet control. I think K did say this that night: not before? But that was less deterrent than to say that Cuban AA was not under his control, and the tac nucs would be under local soviet control. Once again in the nuclear era, a superpower whose forces were "surrounded and potentially overwhelmed" (like ours in Berlin, or our allies in Dienbienphu or on the Offshore Islands, possibly in Korea) relies on threats of first-use



(which were not bluffs! K and the whole Presidium were actually willing to see the Soviet troops on Cuba "defended" with these! Literally suicidal (and worse)! **This Soviet plan—to use tac nucs on the invasion force at sea and on the beaches—was not more prudent, less suicidal (for the Soviets on Cuba, and really, for the SU and world!) than Castro's "crazy" proposal for Soviet preemption in case of the invasion of Cuba. Both, a combination of Masada and Samson options! The trigger to the Domsday Machine was in the hands of Cuban anti-aircraft gunners and of the local commander of Soviet ground troops in Cuba.**

not  
crucial  
of SU  
but not  
D.L  
cap.

(K could not openly admit, I suppose, that McNamara's worry about unauthorized action under attack was soundly based; his deployment of the missiles would then look all the more irresponsible. We—even Gilpatric—talked about deliberate FU from a position of great superiority (though that wouldn't make it rational). K hadn't been doing that, since Gilpatric (though he did say, "you can't swat our ass" any more: i.e., they had retaliatory capability. (Not much! Except against Europe, which he didn't press; maybe because it would look like a threat against hostages, and hurt him with Europeans.)

JFK's determination not to strike or invade (and to keep US actions under his personal control: see McNamara to Anderson) was not sufficient to keep nuclear war from occurring, and was not the cause of its not exploding on Sunday, October 28 or Monday. Nor was his willingness to make not only a secret trade of the Turkish missiles but an open trade (with great damage to NATO cohesion, and a political disaster for JFK and the Democrats). Despite all these, the crisis was about to explode as of Sunday morning, Oct. 28, if Khrushchev—precisely to avert that, which he correctly foresaw (on the basis of knowledge that JFK lacked, and most American participants and scholars lacked for twenty-five years and more—<sup>had not</sup> conceded to Kennedy's terms of Oct. 27 (and the RFK ultimatums of that night. In their ignorance both of these secret Soviet considerations and of Khrushchev's basic readiness to dismantle the missiles as of Thursday, Oct. 25 (Wednesday in Moscow)—"only not just yet, so long as American invasion is not imminent"—no American had thought it likely that he would do so. And they have either been perplexed ever since or have argued for explanations of his action that are mistaken.

had not

Anderson

The threat of invasion and apparent readiness to carry it out were indeed critical; but an ultimatum of invasion Tuesday (airstrike Monday) was not quite enough in itself, I believe, to get Khrushchev to drop the demand for the Turkish missiles on Sunday morning, rather than waiting until that evening to see if JFK would come around. He had good reason to hope that JFK would do so; and he would have been rewarded! JFK was ready to do so, and almost surely would have done so, giving K a win: **if no US airplane had been shot down, meanwhile, during Sunday.** If Khrushchev had had Castro under control and had known it—if he had felt sure that Castro's gunners would not be firing Sunday morning—there was no reason for him not to wait a matter of hours to try to get a Turkish open deal (as Dobrynin tried to do on Oct. 28, even after K had accepted the secret deal!). Unless (which is possible) RFK's talk had persuaded him that JFK would not bend on this: i.e., unless JFK's actual bluff on this Saturday night had worked perfectly. That it was a bluff, without question (claiming that there was no chance he would accept an open deal) is demonstrated conclusively by the JFK/Rusk/Cordier

& Co. (McN)



proposal. (Who knew of this besides Rusk and Cordier? McNamara? No. Bundy? NO. RFK: probably not, given a disagreement between JFK and RFK in the ExComm on that day, Saturday, about a deal on Turkey. Kenny O'Donnell?!)

X Friday night: it looked like we'd won (as I expected). (When was my exchange with Dillon? "We've got to give them something. What are we offering them?" "We're offering them not to destroy their god damn missiles!" Dillon snorted, made a face, jerked his head away from me.

Saturday morning: the new message; (was it at a meeting that day that the above exchange took place?) I still thought a deal was unnecessary; in effect, I thought K would come around, if we held firm. No encouragement came from NATO for a deal (unless from the British, and apparently, the Norwegians and Danes; did they all prefer a US invasion? Thanks a lot! All "infantile egomaniacs," in the words of Nicole Kidman in Days of Thunder, about the illusion of immortality, invulnerability, control. They all would have gone! With their populations... (Thanks to the Presidium's willingness—not just Castro—to defend the beaches with the tactical nuclear weapons they had sent. Did they accept **any** responsibility, when they deposed Khrushchev in October 14, 1964, for their having gone along with his reckless, harebrained scheme in 1962. ?

What if the Soviets had leaked the secret deal? (Which RFK warned Dob. not to do). "It would have been off." And then what? Well, actually, K would have wanted to go ahead and dismantle the missiles anyway. But Castro would have been even more furious. And the Americans didn't know that K was that willing to settle. Would there have been any inspection allowed? Would the Il-28s have gone? Might Castro have continued to fire at American recon planes?! Could JFK have even given a no-invasion pledge, to get the missiles out, without an invasion?

All this American pressure for an invasion was in ignorance of the nuclear warheads and the tac nucs and the SU willingness to use the latter against invasion (if not the former, as Castro wanted!) (Or worse than ignorance, in the case of the JCS: apparent insouciance, insanity.) (K did say, in his Oct. 27 letter, that the missiles were not to be used unless there was an attack on Cuba, or the SU or its allies! Type II deterrence, a Soviet umbrella not only over Cuba! Part of the SU FS threat! Oi gevalt! (Like our Turkish missiles: not just, or mainly, for defense of Turkey!)

What if K had turned over the MRBMs to Cuban operational control and ownership, like our Turkish IRBMs: "SU keeps ownership and 'control' of the warheads." (We didn't keep 10,000 combat troops in Turkey!)

Sunday, September 18, 2011  
10:17 AM  
\\C-II\\The Odds: I

Despite the assignment to prepare options for responding to a Soviet attack on our missiles in Turkey, I believed it very unlikely that the Soviets would risk doing that even if we did attack theirs in Cuba. Harry and I were even more confident that the chance of nuclear war erupting from this confrontation was extremely low. We presumed that was also the attitude of the President and his lieutenants on the ExComm.

We knew, of course, that a large part of the public, not only in the U.S. but throughout the world, thought otherwise. But the basic reason for our own confidence was our awareness of the overwhelming strategic nuclear superiority of the United States. And that, we knew, was not nearly so clear to the public.

After all, Kennedy had run for election in 1960 largely on the issue of a supposed "missile gap" favoring the Soviets. When he had discovered in office, in the fall of 1961, that the real missile (and bomber) gap was grossly in favor of the U.S., he did not make a dramatic effort to inform the public of just how wrong he had been. As a result, the public did not realize--indeed, the reality was still highly classified--how very little the Soviets actually had in the way of nuclear forces threatening the U.S.

In the fall of 1962 the U.S. had several hundred intercontinental, intermediate-range and sub-launched warheads and 3000 bombers within range of the Soviet Union. On the other side, the Soviets had at that time about 10 operational ICBM's within range of the United States (aside from the highly vulnerable missiles on Cuba, not yet operational) and about 190 intercontinental bombers.

Facing that near-monopoly of U.S. strategic nuclear power against the Soviet Union, it was inconceivable to us that Khrushchev would initiate nuclear operations under almost any circumstances. Indeed, I was confident, "Khrushchev had to back down."

In that belief I backed the blockade, and the implicit threat of an air strike, which seemed likely to me to cause the Soviets to withdraw. Indeed, I didn't think it would be necessary to carry out an air strike in order to get rid of the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Nor did I believe it would be necessary to trade away our missiles in Turkey, an option which, like the majority of the ExComm, I strongly opposed for reasons of NATO solidarity.

However, if an air strike did take place and if the Soviets did, against all odds, recklessly confront us in Europe or at sea, one thing was unequivocally clear to Rowen and me: the U.S. should not initiate nuclear war under any circumstances, no matter what threats it might have made.

Based on a conversation I had had with Secretary McNamara in 1961--which I had been warned afterward to keep entirely to myself--I believed that he and the President



shared this view (in contrast to their public, official statements). (Much later, McNamara asserted publicly that, in effect, I was right about this; he said he had given JFK, and LBJ after him, his advice that the United States should not initiate nuclear attacks under any circumstances.) This was a key basis for my strong sense of personal loyalty to McNamara.

On the Soviet side, there might or might not be nuclear warheads ashore for the MRBMs. But even if there were, Khrushchev's message of Friday night had confirmed what we would have assumed in any case, that they were firmly in the hands of Soviet troops, which was to say under his personal control. All past intelligence indicated that the Soviets were far more—appropriately—concerned and organized to prevent unauthorized action with nuclear weapons than we were. It seemed self-evident that Khrushchev would not choose to commit national suicide by launching missiles against the US even in the absence of Kennedy's specific warning of our response.

What this added up to was that the Soviets seemed to us likely to back down to U.S. firm non-nuclear threats, but that even if they did not, there was almost no chance that either side would resort to nuclear weapons.

Harry and I were wrong. But our views in 1962 were at least consistent with our support of the threatening posture and active "pressures" the ExComm had chosen from the beginning. We assumed that the ExComm members we were serving in a staff role thought much the same way.

Indeed, my notes reveal that sometime during that week, Harry Rowen remarked to me, "I think the Executive Committee puts the chance of nuclear war very low, though they still may overestimate it by ten times. They may put it at 1 in 100." He himself would have said the odds were "1 in 1000."

But the day after the crisis ended, on Monday, October 29, he informed me that his boss, Paul Nitze, had just told him that he had put the chance of some form of nuclear war, if we had struck the missiles on Cuba, as "fairly high." And his estimate of the risk, Nitze thought, was the lowest in the ExComm; everyone else put it higher. Harry had asked him what odds he would have given. Nitze's answer was:

"1 in 10."

I remember vividly my reaction, that Monday, to this news. It came in two parts. First, puzzlement: why would they put the risk that high? How could they figure that either side was that ready to go to nuclear war? Could it be that Nitze, and the others, like the public, had not really absorbed the new intelligence on the strategic balance, or that they didn't fully believe it?

Second, slightly delayed: "One in ten??!! Of nuclear war?! ...And we were doing what we were doing?!!"

What the U.S. had been doing, by order of the ExComm, included: (1) the blockade itself, an act of war; (2) forcing Soviet submarines to surface; (3) high-level and low-level reconnaissance flights over Cuba; (4) a large-scale airborne alert with significant risk of accidents involving nuclear weapons; (5) continuing aerial reconnaissance, even after several planes were fired on and one shot down on Saturday; (6) full preparations--if they were wholly a bluff, they fooled us--for invasion and airstrike; 7) rejecting summarily all proposals for a non-violent resolution, either accepting the missiles or trading away bases.

I believed that the stakes in this confrontation, in global political terms, were quite high. I was prepared to support non-nuclear threats, I was even willing to take some risks of conventional war in Cuba. I was, in short, a cold warrior working for the Defense Department.

But to be willing to take a 10% chance of nuclear war?!...In order to avoid a public trade of the Turkish missiles?

Who were these people I was working for? Were the civilians no better than the military? Was the President insane?

I would not have felt better if I had read a later common account of the President's own odds during the crisis. As Richard Neustadt and Graham Allison put it: "In October 1962, President John Kennedy chose a path of action that, in his judgment, entailed a one-in-three chance of nuclear war."<sup>1</sup>

Actually, like many others on this point, they're seriously misrepresenting their source, whose real report they quote at the bottom of the same page: "According to Theodore Sorensen, 'The odds that *the Soviets* would go all the way to war, he [John Kennedy] later said, seemed to him then 'somewhere between one out of three and even.'" (*Kennedy* [New York: Harper & Row, 1965], p. 705). (Emphasis added).

On the face of this quotation, it should be obvious (though evidently it has not been, for many readers) that there is a difference between the risks of nuclear war that Kennedy judged that "the Soviets" were willing to take to avoid backing down and accepting his terms, and risks of nuclear war that he himself was willing to take. There's no necessary relation between the two judgments. My best understanding—reflecting all the data that has become available over half a century—is that the highest probability of nuclear war that Kennedy was willing to accept as the consequence of his own decisions in this confrontation (or any other in his presidency) was higher than zero—or he could not have been doing what he was doing, with his awareness of the possibility of uncontrolled events—but very close to that: much closer to zero than to one-half or one-third. Much, much lower than what he was attributing (wrongly, I would also judge) to the Soviets.

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<sup>1</sup> Afterword to *Thirteen Days*, Robert Kennedy (N.Y. 1971, p. 110).



He did not at all, I believe, judge that the course he was on entailed a one-in-three chance, or higher, of nuclear war (of any kind—to use Nitze's generalization—let alone all-out nuclear war). If he had, he would certainly (I would say) have changed that course decisively.

There is a tendency now to conclude that Kennedy's odds on the likelihood of general war were exaggerated. I, on the contrary, have come to believe that Kennedy's odds were realistic, and that my own estimate at the time was far too low. My judgment--when I was 31 and had never been in a war--that Khrushchev was sure to back down because of the military odds against him does not look good in the light of events of the last quarter century. Leaders, men of power, challenged to accept a humiliating setback, do not often back down when they "ought" to in terms of an objective appraisal of the odds and the long-range interests of their citizens.

It may well be that John F. Kennedy understood this at the time--for himself as well as for Khrushchev--better than I did, and that that was the basis for his higher estimate of the dangers. The fact that Khrushchev did back down I see as the result of his appreciation of special, threatening circumstances, of which President Kennedy and the ExComm remained largely unaware.

Khrushchev was made aware, by RFK's ultimatum on Saturday night, that as of first light the next morning, he would be out of control of the slide toward nuclear war. The likelihood of nuclear war would depend, in the first instance, on the accuracy of Cuban anti-aircraft gunners, which had been improving during the afternoon of Saturday.

If he left the missiles in place throughout Saturday night in Cuba (afternoon and evening in Moscow), he would subsequently be unable to prevent either a likely event Sunday morning--the downing of an American low-level reconnaissance plane by the Cubans—or to reduce decisively the likelihood that it would result in all-out nuclear war. That would follow from the loss of his missiles to American attack, an American invasion of Cuba, the use of Soviet tactical nuclear weapons against the American invasion force (if there had not already been an unauthorized launch of a Soviet MRBM against Florida, under attack), and all-out US nuclear attack on the Soviet Union.

He could prevent this course of events only by ordering the missiles to begin to be dismantled before morning in Cuba and informing the American president of this reliably before American recon planes began flying over Cuba. (JFK had, in fact, cancelled night recon flights Saturday night out of concern that the flares they dropped would be interpreted as an attack, jumping the gun on his 48-hour ultimatum. But morning recon flights were definitely on.)

Alternatively, Khrushchev could have considered, at this late moment, informing Kennedy of the facts of the situation which he had so far chosen to conceal. He would have done better to reconsider that concealment as soon as the warheads were in Cuba, by the beginning of the blockade on Wednesday, October 24. But at this point (Sunday morning in Moscow) he could hardly be sure that this message would get through to the president during the night of October 27-28, in DC, or be absorbed and acted on by the president by morning (canceling the recon flights: and probably, any intention of invading or even attacking the missiles).



Would this information have stopped U.S. plans, or hastened them, to attack the SAMs and missiles? That would depend on McNamara's and JFK's concern for unauthorized firing of the Soviet MRBMs under attack. Consider Kennedy's extreme concern, which came through to me Saturday night, that Turks not be able to fire the IRBMs if they were under attack. Kennedy and McNamara couldn't be less worried than that about the prospect of a local Soviet initiative, especially if Khrushchev had openly contradicted our earlier assumptions about Soviet caution in deploying warheads abroad.

It would still have been beyond American imagination in 1962 that he might have delegated control of tactical nuclear missiles to a local commander, or that the shootdown of the U-2 that morning had not been on his orders. Khrushchev might not have chosen to pass that information along, even if he had revealed the presence of the warheads, though Tom Schelling would have noted that it would have been the most effective deterrent possible against American attack.

Just a significant possibility of a local response, against orders, would have prevented an airstrike as well as an invasion, despite objections from the JCS. Yes, Khrushchev would appear reckless and irresponsible to the world (though no more so than NATO nuclear deployments in Europe or Turkey, if Khrushchev had made that point). But he would have won the duel. Either the missiles would have stayed in Cuba or have been traded off publicly for those in Turkey.

Why didn't he do this earlier, say on Wednesday, the blockade having failed to prevent the delivery of nuclear warheads? He had a potential win in his hands. He may have feared that even the threat that tactical nuclear warheads might be used might not deter an American invasion—that his delegation might be challenged and the Americans would demand it be changed, and act on the expectation that it would be (just as RFK warned that firing on American recon planes by the Cubans must be stopped).

But even so, by Wednesday or Thursday his position on Cuba was as strong as it would ever be, as proof against American invasion plans or attack as it would be by mid-November. To be sure, he had not foreseen that when he announced his deployment in mid-November he would be facing an American blockade in place and public demands by the president that he remove them. By Wednesday, he was facing an enemy who was pulling on the knot in the rope of war. That's a reason why telling JFK about the real dangers of nuclear war on Saturday night was too late, too risky.

But again, why not on Wednesday or Thursday? It's not clear to me that Khrushchev had anything to lose (except a reputation for prudence, already shattered) by revealing the real state of affairs, and he had everything to gain.

Did he not realize the American uncertainty on this issue? Did it ever occur to anyone on the Soviet side that the Americans were unaware, indeed were unable to imagine that Soviets had done something the Americans would have regarded as impossibly reckless and stupid (though the Soviets seem to have seen it as natural)? The Soviets had provided nuclear warheads for short-range tactical missiles --which they had never done before in deploying such missiles overseas, as to Egypt--and they were ready to delegate their use to local commanders, in the fatuous belief that this would not lead to two-sided all-out nuclear war, since it didn't affect the American mainland. (Twenty years later, Tom Schelling was saying at a conference on the crisis—not long before Soviet sources finally did reveal that the warheads had arrived before the blockade--that it was “inconceivable” that Khrushchev would actually have sent the warheads to Cuba).



Nothing we know of the Soviet discussions indicates that any of them realized they were sitting on genuine secrets from the Americans--even after the presence of the missiles had been discovered and the blockade begun--on whose revelation the outcome of the crisis would turn crucially in their favor.

In fact, the intense pressure on the American side, after the blockade had commenced, to consider attacking soon seems to have reflected a faulty logic. It was driven by the need to destroy the missiles—if that were ever to be done—before they became operational. As late as Sunday, October 28 (after Khrushchev's announcement that he was dismantling them) LeMay was still pressing for an attack on these grounds. (He argued that the Soviet claim was a deceit to delay US attack until all the missiles were operational). In the ExComm discussions, everyone seems to have agreed that it was too dangerous to attack once the missiles were armed and ready to fire.

But the real issue was the presence, or not, of the warheads. If they were already there before the blockade was in place, then it was too late to attack by Friday, October 25, since at least eight of the missiles were ready to be launched. If, on the other hand, the blockade had prevented their arrival, then there was no deadline at all. The missiles presented no danger without the warheads. *Either way*, there was no real time-pressure after Friday or so.

The blockade had been touted by McNamara as a first step, which could be followed, if necessary, by air attack and invasion. But that possible follow-up, by general agreement, was feasible *only* before the missiles presented a danger of being launched under or after attack. Thus, it was feasible only within a couple of days of the onset of the blockade, if the Soviets failed to stop their crash effort on the launching sites. No one on the ExComm seems to have made this point, either in the first or second week of the crisis. But it was why the president kept pressing the urgent demand throughout the second week that they stop their construction immediately “and make the missiles inoperable” (by unspecified means).

The US was demanding, in effect, that the missiles sites remain vulnerable to safe attack! This demand the Soviets were manifestly ignoring. And by Saturday night—when RFK was presenting a 48-hour ultimatum to Dobrynin—the point had already passed when the US could attack without danger of losing an American city.

And Kennedy, it appears to me, almost certainly recognized this. The ultimatum, I'm convinced, was a pure bluff. I believe JFK had no intention of following that schedule of attack if Khrushchev failed to comply with his threat and his offer of a covert, deniable trade: which is what the president and his brother expected to happen. This conclusion follows not only from what Kennedy and McNamara had been saying privately throughout the crisis about the acceptability of an overt trade and about the unacceptably horrific risks of any armed conflict, but from Rusk's revelation—delayed twenty-five years—that Kennedy had secretly directed him to prepare a diplomatic basis for the overt trade on Saturday night.

I infer that Kennedy saw the danger of nuclear war at the height of the crisis not as 1/3 or 1/10 but as virtually zero. It would take two to make nuclear war a possibility, and he wasn't going to fire the first shot (or second, after the shooting of Major Anderson). I doubt (and Sorensen makes the same judgment) that he intended to carry out the threat that RFK had conveyed to attack all the SAMs, and more, even if one more American plane had been downed in defiance of his warning on Sunday morning (which he probably thought, incorrectly, to be very unlikely after his warning to

Khrushchev).

He might then have attacked one SAM or AA site, but not more than that, before invoking the Cordier overture. It would have been hard indeed, in face of the military, to make no response at all (as on Saturday). It would actually be easier to "accept a proposal from U Thant" to defuse the crisis by making an overt trade once a two-sided exchange had taken place, with its obvious risks of escalation.

The point of making these detailed speculations is that they underly my conclusion that this crisis came close to blowing up the world **despite not just the desire but the definite determination of both leaders to avert this from happening: despite a readiness of both leaders (historically, very unusual) to accept a humiliating defeat rather than to allow a disaster to happen.**

Neither, the evidence shows, was willing to accept more than a small risk that events might escape their personal control, eluding their ability to prevent a two-sided armed conflict that might escalate to a large war and holocaust. Yet their joint decisions had, after all, led to a *large* risk on Saturday night, October 27 (Sunday morning in Moscow) that this loss of control by both of them was imminent.

Only one of them, Khrushchev, was aware of this. Only his prompt acceptance of personal and national humiliation (a large factor in his losing power later) could lower and eventually eliminate that risk. Fortunately for life on earth, his character and his authority in the Soviet power structure (both of which had contributed to creating this danger!) enabled him at this juncture to do that.



[Question: DID JFK cancel recon flights Sunday morning, on getting the message from Khrushchev? If not (I would guess not) were they fired on? Did Khrushchev prevail on Castro to order his gunners not to fire? (Had orders to the SAM commanders and MRBM commanders not to fire except on Khrushchev's direct orders been sent AND RECEIVED by Soviets in Cuba by Saturday night? It wasn't clear in Moscow just what had happened about the U-2 shoot-down for hours on Saturday, or even longer. Alexeev seems to have believed it was Cubans who had shot it down for twenty years or more.)

[Note: from the onset of “nuclear plenty” in about 1950/52—**not** 1945-50, when atomic weapons were targeted in planning only on cities—the capability of nuclear weapons to destroy **military** targets, especially those capable of nuclear attack (thus, high-value, and requiring prompt attack)—was exploited by planners. (The nuclear warhead—especially the H-bomb—can promise wide-area attack, destruction of protected underground centers, and very fast attack, possibly by surprise, by ICBMs, thus, preemptive. Prior to the H-bomb, the A-bomb wasn’t susceptible to use by ICBMs, except very large ones (the SS-6), so couldn’t be so effective in preemption. )

Hyp: that’s why SAC was so oriented to fast reaction to an intention and order to attack: for preemption, especially before ICBMs were available with H-bomb warheads; planes could get in first only if they could get into the air very fast on order. That may have been rationalized not by the need for a surprise attack or a preemptive attack, but by “avoiding being destroyed” by enemy first-strike.)

That was especially true of air-bases—hard to destroy with conventional bombs—and underground command and control centers, and targets defended by air defenses (where only a few attacking vehicles or bombs might get through). (Brodie even imagined that H-bombs offered hope of destroying widely-dispersed conventional troops: with air-bursts?) To multiply **land-based** offensive targets is to encourage the enemy to multiply nuclear warheads to be able to destroy them preemptively (vs. a fixed number of cities as targets), enhancing the chance of widespread destruction (even of allies and neutrals) by fallout (and smoke: nuclear winter). And those enemy missiles and warheads, in turn, encourage the multiplication of missiles (land- or sea-based) with which to preemptively destroy **them**: a self-reinforcing process.

Imagine if missiles had remained highly inaccurate, incapable of destroying hardened silos of land-based missiles except by huge multiples of attacking missiles. Thus, targets had remained cities only (and air-bases) and subs in port. And/or only submarine missiles had been deployed, without increases in accuracy. Then nothing but minimum deterrence would have “made sense,”; conceivably a side that could threaten total devastation when the other can threaten only a few cities could still threaten first use backed up by a coercive strategy (if you hit some of our cities, we will utterly annihilate you). But if each can destroy at least a sizeable part (does it really take 1/3 or 1/4 of population? How about Bundy’s ten cities, or twenty cities? York’s “closer to one than one hundred”: 49 at most?

To neutralize the threat of a coercive strategy?

But with increased accuracy, then land-based missiles become “invitations to preempt” for the adversary (and if the adversary has land-based missiles also—as does Russia—then it becomes an invitation to use them preemptively. If the Russians can be expected to keep land-based missiles (because of their problems with sub-based forces: ports, support, reliability, US anti-sub capabilities, communications) then there are two reasons for the US to eliminate its land-based missiles: to discourage Russian preemption, and to remove the chance for US preemption against Russian land-



based missiles on a false alarm (assuming only false alarms are at all likely, or even possible). (Assuming US sub warheads are limited in number, if not accuracy and yield, enough to eliminate a threat to Russian land-based missiles; otherwise they could be tempted to preempt on a false alarm, and the Russians could be tempted to preempt, on a false alarm, against US ports, C3, air-bases).

So—the H-bomb encouraged fast-flying ICBMs against SU planes and missiles, despite their inaccuracy. This encouraged a SU ICBM capability, or IRBMs in Cuba! (if threats against Europe weren't enough! As my Gilpatric speech indicated!!) That would produce instability in crisis. (as well as arms-race instability). But with increased accuracy (which meant A-bomb warheads could be on ICBMs, and still be counter-force), and parity, land-based missiles became both unnecessary and dangerously destabilizing in crisis. With subs available, ...

The optimum-mix force—which allowed for cities to be hit immediately (it said nothing about sequencing, withholding, forces that could be held in reserve, holding cities as hostages: just for forces “large enough” to be capable to hitting both cities (obviously) and military targets—proposed in 1959-60 preceded the demonstration of an effective submarine force, and presumed early Soviet deployment of land-based missiles (as targets, and threats).

Suppose it had been addressed assuming the existence of SU sub forces (when did they come in?), and no or small ICBM forces (the reality, for the next five years): how could it have rationalized the prompt destruction of cities? OR the importance of a preemptive capability (essentially infeasible)?

Schles, RFK 426: “The nuclear arsenal should be only the shield against a Soviet first strike.”

[And—mainly—the “shield” (lance, deterrent threat of esc, of US FS) against Soviet retaliation to a US first-use! The “umbrella” covering US or allied forces against **a Soviet nuclear response to US first-use**; not, mainly, against SU FU against allied or US forces.

## C-II

The ExComm did discuss—and McNamara and others favored—an eventual trade of the missiles in Turkey and even in Italy (Britain offered!), and even a time limit on Guantanamo. (They and President rejected Stevenson's proposal to begin with this proposal, even before the blockade. (or instead? Did Stevenson accept the notion of an airstrike ever, at all, or a blockade?)

Question: Could such a proposal have been acceptable to K **without** strong **threats** of airstrike and invasion, which were posed by the blockade? Sorensen, in context of discussion of the moral aspects of the operation (and his own "pacifist" views), did conclude that the **threats**, even of world destruction, had been effective and justified (though he remained uneasy about the latter).

Could they really have been dispensed with, in negotiations (vs. Kissinger), or would the negotiations without threats have been resolved only by giving up much **more** than the IRBMs? (Along with accepting a Republican Congress, if not impeachment!) (Note that McNamara talked about impeachment in 1961 as a result of buying less than 1000 Minuteman; but in that case, their argument would have been very strong. Refusal to even threaten the missiles would have been harder to explain, especially to have ruled out a strike before they became operational. Taylor was right, on Friday, Oct. 19, that it was "now or never," as the missiles approached operational status; he feared they would be camouflaged later [WHY NOT SOONER? See my hypothesis about K's strategy], but more importantly, the nuclear warheads had not actually arrived!

(BTW, both I, and I think Harry Rowen, thought Sorensen's flourish about treating a single missile from Cuba as warranting a full retaliatory response against the SU as unnecessary, crazy, excessive.)

I can say: What I'm suggesting here are very unfamiliar propositions. It would be natural for those who have followed the literature (and those who have written it) to dismiss them as purely speculative. They aren't; they don't rest simply on hunches of mine, they are based on my own close study of the evidence available, including some that has not been made public before. I will be happy to discuss the evidence for them elsewhere.

The point here is that I read that evidence as indicating that the leaders' intentions were strongly against going to war, precisely because they saw the ultimate states for all mankind and recognized the danger of miscalculations, misunderstanding, ignorance, accidents, unauthorized actions, events escaping from their control, above all once armed conflict of any kind had begun. But they greatly underestimated the danger of that process beginning **before** shots had been exchanged, as they threatened, sparred, deployed, demonstrated. The crisis was ended by Khrushchev when he realized that one American had been shot without his authorization—by some good fortune, without setting off an immediate escalation—and that another one might be killed within hours, again beyond his control, triggering a process that could annihilate the Soviet Union and engulf all mankind within a day or two if he did not yield immediately to the American demands. The no-invasion pledge did give him some face-saving cover; the secret assurance on Turkey, none, almost surely having no effect on the outcome whatever. The threat of invasion two days away would not by itself have brought the backdown on Sunday; it allowed enough time to probe whether it was a bluff (as in fact it was). What allowed no time was the prospect of another shootdown imminently which would obviously (even



without RFK confirming it to him Saturday night) entail a high likelihood of a large air attack and start the countdown to invasion—and nuclear war.

[Note: for many years afterward, former ExComm members like Bundy, I believe, decried the notion that the Caribbean Crisis had been a nuclear crisis at all.]

The JCS were actually closer to the reality than JFK in judging the likelihood of a Soviet response against Berlin or against attacks on the Turkish missiles in response to our attack on the missiles in Cuba. JFK saw a blockade against Berlin as a virtual certainty. LeMay and perhaps the other JCS as close to impossible: "They would do nothing." JFK saw this as not just questionable, unjustified confidence, but as crazy, totally wrong, impossible. But Soviet sources (Fursenko) indicate that K didn't regard such a response as helpful or prudent at all.

What would the civilians or JFK have done if they had shared the JCS's confidence (which seems to have been justified, realistic, and for the very reasons they considered: the reality and K's perception of the reality of the strategic balance, not only in the Caribbean)?

On the other hand, the JCS were totally out of touch with the reality both of the presence of tactical nuclear warheads on the island and the readiness not only of the Cubans but of the Soviet leadership (the Presidium, not only Khrushchev) to use them in "defense" of the Soviet military presence on the island (which was itself vastly greater than any of the Americans imagined). JFK didn't imagine this either, but he gave much more realistic weight to the possibility of an unauthorized use of the MRBMs (without being certain the warheads were there: this was the "hell of a gamble" in Fursenko's title, as JFK saw it and the JCS—inexplicably, inexcusably, outrageously—did not.

Did JFK feel certain that he could decide **not** to launch a large-scale attack followed by invasion—not to carry out the first threat RFK made to Dobrynin—if a second plane were shot down? He wanted not to, he said on Saturday night about Sunday morning (before RFK made his threat). But could he have held back? In the Bay of Pigs he had said he would **not** send US forces overtly. In Vietnam, in October, he had not committed himself one way or the other, before deciding not to send forces; likewise, in Laos earlier. In C-I, he said on Saturday he said that he **would**.

And he would have faced a pretty high probability of military resignations if he didn't, or at least the certainty of military public leaks and statements and Congressional condemnation. (He didn't get leaks on any of the others, any more than LBJ did! By holding out the possibility of compliance with JCS demands "later," the presidents kept the military quiet. (Which they later regretted, and were condemned for by McMaster; and learned their lesson in pressuring Obama in 2009 over Afghanistan). (And see revolt of retired generals against Rumsfeld, though it didn't get him fired).



9:15 AM  
Sunday, June 8, 14

Grand illusions: Failures of Foresight

[I wake up, at 83, thinking: What will the next 83 years be like? Would I like to live them?

(See the question: If you could be reborn on your death, but to inhabit the life of a person chosen at random among the globe's population, would you choose to do that?]

**What Grand Illusions are we nursing today?**

**Consider old ones: (unforeseen developments, or delusions)**

0. Who foresaw the "impossible" Titanic sinking on its maiden voyage (or, owner's decisions that led to this, and to the deaths of more than half of passengers, the obedience of captain and first mate)

1. La Grand Illusion (see film): **WWI**. Who in 1912 foresaw the war about to come, or its nature? [Although Great Powers were arming to the hilt, especially—Germany and Britain—with battleships, and were ready to mobilize huge armies. Although plans of all called for preemption, and (Germany) violation of neutrality.

Who foresaw trenches, machine guns, masses of artillery, stalemate of the offensive, gas? (Answer: Jean de Bloch in 1898, six volumes: refuted by all military: all wrong. (SLindqvist, 22)

Or, before WWII (and other than Germany): mass tank warfare, combined blitzkrieg  
Century of wars.

2. Who foresaw a Hitler in Germany? Has there ever been another, before or after (since Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Alexander?) (Isn't the closest: PNAC, neo-cons, GWB and Cheney?)

(ask TR): How much did Hitler really envision running the world? World conquest? After all, he wanted to preserve the British Empire (as secondary to his? Or not?) Did he, then, really foresee or aim at ruling America? (See the Grand --- plans of CFR) Sub-saharan Africa, Latin America? Did he not suppose a Japanese empire in the Far East?

Were not his plans mainly continental, Eurasia, primarily Poland and Russia for resettlement and food, autarchy, Lebensraum? (and purity of race:

continent under Germany, cleansed of Jews, and to some extent Slavs)? And Middle East, for oil (or, if Brits had collaborated with him, would he have left that to them, rather than have his foot on their lifeline?)

Did he initially want war in the West, aside from Britain (which he didn't want)? If Britain and France had not declared war on him, over Poland (he didn't expect them to interfere with his conquest of Poland, and he was right) wouldn't he have gone on to Russia? Or would he have had to secure his west flank in any case, before Russia? Or, dealt with them (not Britain) after Russia, for continental rule?

(Did he have hopes of subordinating France, or the other countries, without conquest, after conquering Russia?

How realistic, in retrospect, was it for him to hope that war with Russia could be settled in his favor, after conquest of western Russia, if he had done it "optimally" (starting earlier in the year, prepared for winter fighting, perhaps concentrating on Moscow...). Might the Russians have finally given up, in contrast to the Vietnamese?

--Nuclear deterrence. Cold War.

--Stalin (and later) = Hitler (in ambitions of conquest); Cold War; RAND, JCS, CW politics

--Soviet nuclear plans: bomber gap, missile gap, surprise attack

--(earlier): surprise attack on Pearl Harbor (unless, by Naval Intelligence, FDR! Still controversial)

--Earlier, 1750 or 1800: Industrialization. (?)

--Population explosion (Pasteur?! Hg)

Wikipedia on Population explosion: "Whereas tens of thousands of years passed before our species reached the one billion mark, around 1800 AD, it took only 123, 33, 14, 13, 12 and 13 years to add each succeeding billion."

Wikipedia: "Approximately 7.2 billion humans inhabited the Earth in year 2013. By comparison, there might be 500,000 elephants of different kinds, 200,000 chimpanzees, 100,000 gorillas, 20,000 polar bears, 3,000 tigers, 2,000 giant pandas and 200 California condors. Notably, the human population has grown about ten-fold over the past 300 years and nearly four-fold in just the last century."

Wikipedia, on population explosion: "It took the entire history of humankind for the population to reach 1 billion around 1810. Just 120 years later, this doubled to 2 billion people (1930);[3 billion in 1960]then 4 billion in 1975 (45 years). The



number of people in the world has risen from 4.4 billion people in 1980 to 5.8 billion today. And it is estimated that the population could double again to nearly 11 billion in less than 40 years."

[Why? Birth rates remaining high—especially in LDCs (less developed countries), death rate declining sharply with industrial revolution; more food production; public health (safe drinking water; germ theory, Pasteur, 1870's); vaccination; conquest of disease (medicines; prevention and cure); greatly lowered infant mortality, longer life.

[JMM, Jason Mark: distinguish issues, for non-human animals, of birth-rate and life-span vs. quality of life; bringing huge numbers of chickens into world, but Auschwitz-type conditions of life (as distinct, from their death rate. What is the death rate for chickens in the wild? Cattle, sheep, pigs, etc.) Result of global vegetarianism: much smaller populations of these animals (enormously); better life?

How much was this foreseen, except by Malthus?

--Human effects on climate. (Jason Mark: This may possibly have come with early agriculture, cutting down forests for agriculture (see China; Gary Snyder aborted history): this may have caused or speeded up ending of last Ice Age!)

But especially with Anthropocene (starting when?): at least, 1800. Fossil fuels. (Why not much earlier?) Release of CO<sub>2</sub>. (Who foresaw problem, when?) Obstacles to changing.

What will the world population be in 100 years, or at most 150? Will it be as much as half the present (less than half what it will be by 2075)? A quarter? Less? (With nuclear winter, yes).

(Will it ever reach 10 -11 billion, as supposed by end of century?) Will it be down to pre-industrial (one billion: but that was before advances that have led to population explosion, which would still be known. On the other hand, the climate and environment would be less benign for humans; especially after nuclear war, with radiation). Or, pre-agricultural, pre-civilization, cities: 100 million? 10 million?

(John Hart: 3 or 4 billion?)

(Interim measure, to reduce the level of catastrophe—our only/best aim of reform now, Ezra Klein "(we're fucked": like Stephen Emmott, Kingsnorth): **efforts to stop population growth**, in both MDCs and LDCs (more and less developed) and to **reduce** it radically?! I haven't seen that mentioned!

--1880's/1914: "Age of peace, end of war."  
 (Norman Angell, Tsar, Hague, Nobel, Carnegie...)

I.e., actuality of continued wars, even after start of nuclear era, or end of CW

--WWII, as of 1920's (until when, in various places? By whom? In US; UK; France; Russia; Germany (except Hitler; other Nazis?! German Army, before 1937?) [When did Stalin foresee danger again from Germany—he was given credit for rearming SU with this in mind—prior to his "sleep" during Pact? (Did he prepare at all for attack from Hitler after Sept. 1939?! What was UK doing? Preparing radar, AA, fighters?)

--Good side: Who foresaw that deterrence of large or small nuclear war would last from 1945 to 2014?! (Bad side: they didn't foresee US FU threats outside Europe, or preparations to carry out first-strike.)

--Also: the worst was avoided (see list: no big war with China, etc.; Berlin, NATO; nucs in VN, or bigger bombing, or invasion of NVN; no nucs in Gulf War or Iraq;



Foreseen, not illusions:

--"Cultural lag" [Has it been a "lag," **or an ever-growing "gap"** between politics/culture/"civilization" (ha)/values/morals/institutions/"knowledge"/"wisdom"/concern for "others"/strangers, on the one hand, and "progress" in the technology of destruction (including now, since 1800, technology of ecological/climate destruction!)]

Has there **ever** any "progress" or growth in wisdom, in mass, lasting, effective change in morals, concern, etc. that caught up with and surpassed the "advances" in technology and the tendency to use it destructively, militaristically? (Above all, with those human characteristics that continued to make war **possible**, acceptable, destructive?)

(Note the shifts that take place virtually overnight in values, aims, etc. when war commences: toward "war values, war government, hatreds, fears, contempt, (war constitution—not formal, acknowledged, but replacement of "old Constitution," even with endless "war on terror"). But then: shifts when war ends, when it does. Change of alliances! Friendship with Germans, Japanese (even, Vietnamese with Americans).

Yet unforeseen: And all the time, unaware, we (mainly Western civilization, industrialization, fossil fuel consumers] were planting and (now) beginning to reap the seeds of our own global destruction. As so many other empires and civilization have gone down, destroyed themselves (their environment) in the past: so now, the US empire and every other, human civilization worldwide, the great majority of the human species as of its current population, is going to be destroyed, by our own efforts. (Nucs, climate; epidemics? Over-population (water); toxic wastes...)

(This has been foreseeable since when? No later than 1988 (Hansen); a quarter-century ago.

From start of last century:

--The world- and war-transforming implications of the airplane.

--City-busting by aircraft (supposedly, mainly by gas: Why didn't this happen at all?)

[See Lost Horizon, James Hilton, 1933! (the year Hitler came to power; one year after **first** episode of mass city-bombing, of Shanghai by the Japanese; first terror bombing of a civilian population (Tuchman, Stilwell), 10-20,000 civilians killed by carrier aircraft (compared to 4000 Chinese KIA, 5000 Japanese)) [Hilton was wrong—as late as film 1937, as Sino-Japanese war commenced--that western

civilization would be destroyed, culture lost, in coming war. No mention of his prescience about bombing in Wikipedia entry)

--Atomic warfare, exterminating cities, populations, races (so far, only the first. Deterrence not foreseen: except temporarily, in Pallid Giant).

--Stalemate in Vietnam, with scale and strategy pursued by JFK and LBJ (secretly: while JCS nursed a secret illusion that a different scale and strategy would have won).

--Nuclear arms race (by Franck, Szilard, et al; Oppenheimer after Hiroshima)

--H bomb to follow A bomb (by scientists: secret until 1950). Large numbers. Scale. (possibility of civilization-busting, extinctions)

--Fall-out (by scientists; secret or obscured by Ike);



5/17/11 9:34 PM

notes on:

Gambling with the Planet, Joseph Stiglitz 4-6-11 Project Syndicate

[Experts in both the nuclear and finance industries assured us that new technology had all but eliminated the risk of catastrophe. Events proved them wrong; not only did the risks exist, but their consequences were so enormous that they easily erased the supposed benefits of the systems that industry leaders promoted.

“Before the Great Recession, America’s economic gurus—from the head of the Federal Reserve to the titans of finance—boasted that we had learned to master risk.

“innovative” financial instruments such as derivatives and credit-default swaps enabled the distribution of risk throughout the economy. We now know that they deluded not only the rest of society, but even themselves.

[they underestimated dangers of “fat-tail distributions”...rare events with huge consequences, sometimes called “black swans.” Events that were supposed to happen once in a century—or even once in the lifetime of the universe—seemed to happen every ten years. Worse, not only was the frequency of these events vastly underestimated; so was the astronomical damage they would cause—something like the meltdowns that keep dogging the nuclear industry.”

[But it’s not just ‘wishful thinking’: “we might have few incentives to think hard at all.” [but this is not because the events are so rare, supposedly; it’s because “when others bear the costs of mistakes, the incentives favor self-delusion. A system that socializes losses and privatizes gains is doomed to mismanage risk.”

[mismanage from the point of view of society, including victims. But if the managers can count on not being victims, then they’re not being “wishful” to underestimate or ignore the risks: the risks are for others, not themselves, they are for people that the managers secretly don’t care about, the costs are not for the managers. For them there is no risk!

See Adam Serwer today on the SCOTUS rejection of the Jeppeson case, on the state secrets privilege with respect to torture:

#### **SCOTUS Rejects Extraordinary Rendition Case**

[Adam Serwer](#) | May 16, 2011 | [Adam Serwer's Blog](#)

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On the surface, *Mohamed et al v. Jeppesen Dataplan, Inc.* was about whether or not the government could invoke the states-secrets doctrine in order to dismiss an entire case on the grounds that it would expose

government secrets and harm national security. The state-secrets doctrine, prior to the last administration, had typically been used to block specific pieces of evidence from being used -- not entire cases from being heard. The **Obama** administration has continued the **Bush**-era expansion of the state-secrets doctrine.

The *Jeppesen* case was really about accountability for torture. The five plaintiffs in the case said they had been rendered to third countries where they were tortured as part of the Bush administration's extraordinary rendition program. They were suing the private companies that the government had contracted to help facilitate transportation. By refusing to take this case, the Supreme Court let stand a previous 9th Circuit ruling in favor of the government. Decisions to hear a case only require four votes -- which means at least one of the four Democratic nominees to the court joined their conservative colleagues to prevent this case from being heard.

What this means is that if the government sends you to be tortured in a foreign country you have no recourse against the private company that facilitated your torture as long as the government declares it a state secret. As I wrote last year, this means that "you can't sue the government, you can't sue the private company that was involved, and frankly you can probably count on the people who helped facilitated it getting good jobs elsewhere in the same field." In the absence of any kind of decision from the courts indicating that the Bush administration's actions were illegal, the only thing standing in the way of torture being used again is a flimsy, reversible executive order that could be withdrawn the day the next Republican president is inaugurated.

There is awesome, limitless power for the government in secrecy. As long as it keeps matters under wraps, the courts have decided for themselves that they will not check the power of the executive branch, meaning that when the president does it, it's not illegal as long as he can keep it a secret. This should help put the Obama administration's aggressive pursuit of whistle-blowers into greater context -- virtually the only avenue left for accountability when the government breaks the law is through exposure in the press.

The managers (like the torturers) were gambling with other people's money; they got the gains, they didn't really risk on the downside. No "accountability," no risk of losing their jobs, losing their own money, facing prosecution. They can't **admit** that they see no risk (for themselves) precisely because a) they won't be held accountable, and (b) they don't **care** when the other people suffer. (Without accountability, they're not really working for them, representing them, serving their interests.)

A whistleblower is someone who shouts "Fire" in a crowded theater that's on fire



Saturday, November 5, 2011  
9:41 AM

## \C-II\Crises & Decision Theory

Crisis: (Chinese characters, cited by Nixon): "Danger and Opportunity."  
Rahm Emmanuel: never waste a crisis.

An impending danger—that can still be averted—or even, turned to advantage. (The need to avert the danger, and the justification for taking unusual or extreme measures to do so, perhaps breaking norms or laws or constraints, the mobilization of a group behind one's leadership to do so, may enable one to achieve goals otherwise or earlier unattainable).

But I studied political crises (specifically, ones involving a danger or threat of nuclear war).

Distinguish these from: impending natural disasters, like an ongoing or impending flood, floodwaters rising or a dike breaking; drought, water shortage; approach of hurricane; tsunami; volcano; epidemic.

Little dimension of anger, humiliation, betrayal, prior deception, ascendancy of a rival, loss of status, subordination, shame (unless for exposure of lack of proper preparation or caretaking: Katrina, Gulf oil spill).

All the above are likely to be present in a political crisis, involving imminent losses or defeats caused by a rival or adversary, powerful human agents, or by exposure of secrets: which can still be averted or ameliorated (or turned to advantage: 9-11—Iraq invasion, suspension of Constitution; or "provocations"—Tonkin Gulf,

My impression at the time of C-II: that it was entirely a provocation by SU, unprovoked by US (unless, by my Gilpatric speech! And Ann Arbor, etc. WHY WAS THERE THAT SERIES OF 'FIRST-STRIKE' DECLARATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION?! The intended target, as far as I knew about Athens (hence Ann Arbor) was de Gaulle, not Khrushchev (unless, to change SU plans to avoid cities: but they would have had to believe that city-avoidance was not only intended but feasible. **And compare JFK's and SAC's inclination to disperse B-52s to city-airports, in the call of that same year, in C-II! And N in 1969!!! A total contradiction of "no cities" doctrine! MAD indeed! Might SU have done the same?!! As we were giving the example!\_**

Why did I **think** K had done this? Or hsr? What was the urgency? Other than Berlin.

I found in my crisis study (Skybolt, Suez, Cuba) a strong component of leader's anger, at feelings of humiliation and betrayal and being lied to, made a fool of, deceived, kept from secrets (excluded from secret knowledge, secret circle: see knowledge of taping,

Haldeman but not Ehrlichman. Who knew of JFK's taping? (O'Donnell? RFK?) LBJ's?? )

Note: **not all secrets, by any means, are guilty secrets.** Info is kept secret, in the first instance, to gain advantage, to lessen vulnerability, to defend. None of these may be illegitimate or embarrassing if revealed. Particularly secret knowledge is knowledge of another's—a rival or ally or subordinate's—secrets, including their knowledge of your own secrets and the process by which each of you tries to penetrate the secrets of the other. Later revelation may: make it harder to keep or penetrate secrets in future; may "cast a new light" on your own performance earlier, your aims, your relationships, lead to new interpretations (good or bad, dangerous or not).

In particular, "good" advice or even actions may need above all to be kept secret, if it would appear "dovish," weak, unmanly: or simply, controversial, attracting blame or reproach from some; even if it appears to the actor (realistically) as right, good, best, effective. Doves on Vietnam; readiness to make concessions on Cuba. (Actual concession; and especially, JFK's readiness to go further).

There are differences between what is right to do, what is legal, what is moral: and between what you have done or intended to do, and what others think about it, or what you have said about it).

(Can something be "immoral" and still, in the circumstances, the right or best thing to do, even, obligatory? In that case, is it still "immoral" or "evil" or "wrong" in those circumstances? Decision theorist tends to say that virtually nothing (he can imagine) is the wrong thing to do, evil or immoral per se, i.e. in all imaginable circumstances. Nothing is excluded as an "option" in extraordinary circumstances: i.e. "crises." That's an incentive to regard a situation as a "crisis," threatening the imminence of a "greater evil, a great danger (not only to oneself)" when one wants "permission" to do something ordinarily regarded as evil, or illegal, or immoral.

K/T: (my theory of catastrophes): When you see someone taking what appears to be a wildly disproportionate risk: **guess** (heuristically) that they see as their only alternative a "sure thing," a certainty, of imminent personal (and also, perhaps, team) loss/defeat/humiliation, which may be averted by the risky gamble. Heuristically: look for this.

If the risky gamble involves violence to others, guess also that: 1) there is an element of anger, humiliation, prior to the choice, and (2) a desire for revenge or "evening the score": a shift of "utilities"—including vN-M utilities, but also an actual preference for causing pain or humiliation or loss to another (even at a price to oneself); along with (3) a fear of **impending further humiliation and loss**, which may be averted (or at least, compensated for or avenged) by the violence (which may be to scapegoats!)



[Do economists or decision theorists (DTs) ever consider the “altered state” of emotions, fear, jealousy, revenge, humiliation, anger, altering one’s utilities or preferences for the well-being or emotional state of **others**?]

(4) Also: guess that the risk may not seem so disproportionate to the actor (especially in their current emotional state) as it does to observers: a) the possible “worst outcome” (social disaster, to observers) seems to the actor little worse than the personal “disaster” that is otherwise certain. Thus, to Castro and other Cubans, occupation, or the death by conventional bombing of “millions” of Cubans (perhaps not exaggerated, over a long time of guerrilla warfare) was not (much) worse than their annihilation by “limited” nuclear warfare, or even the destruction of most of the world by a Soviet or US preemptive attack. *Patria o muerte!* (*Muerte of all!*) Readiness of Cubans to die to the last man (woman and child: literally! *Masada!* )

(See Saddam and his Domsday Machine! The Dead Hand. NATO! Haig on NFU. NATO plans not only as a threat (or K’s bluffs! In Suez or Berlin or C-I) but as something that might actually be implemented. What could be more “nihilistic”?! Literally, “better dead than Red.” See rhetoric of Power, Russell, LeMay: two Americans, one Russian; two nuclear weapons left, one Soviet. (**Only relative payoffs count; strictly zero-sum.**)

**The Masada complex (see Samson Option) in the nuclear era!**

**Samson option: Israel, France, South Africa. Aum Shinrykyo. Castro in C-II!**

See the implications of letting a given country have its own nuclear weapons: more willing to use them to “defend” its own territory, or avenge invasion, than any ally. Thus, RFK considers giving them to Germany in C-II as response to K putting them in Cuba. SU considers giving them to Cuba. France’s Force de Frappe (smaller, but more sure to be used than American’s) (and usable against Germany).

5) the risk may appear to the actor to be smaller than it appears to observers (though it may not! ). Thus, K thought the missiles would not be discovered until they were fully operational, “too late to be attacked”. (And he almost made it! He would have, if 1) he had used his SAMs for **the only thing they were good for**: preventing U-2 surveillance! (as McCone expected). A mystery, why he didn’t! or 2) he had announced their readiness, with warheads (perhaps bluffing: though that wasn’t necessary), when they were, instead of keeping this secret; or 3) announced the presence of tac nucs with warheads, and delegation!;

and K overestimated JFK’s willingness to accept a *fait accompli* (was this an overestimate, if he had actually presented him with a *fait accompli* rather than a crisis, s a result of a *Fait Malaccompli*? K underestimated the pressure on JFK to **act boldly and violently if there was still a chance to prevent the missiles becoming operational**. (After all, the very purpose of the secrecy in transit was to prevent a blockade if they were announced openly. So why not worry about a blockade or worse, an air attack, if they were discovered before they were operational? Especially (1) during an election



campaign, in which the Republicans were pressing for an invasion precisely because of what the Soviets **were** doing openly (*a mystery: the Soviets don't seem to have considered the risk that their own open actions, or discovered actions, would increase the likelihood and imminence of an invasion; perhaps because they wrongly regarded an invasion as "inevitable" without their actions, so that their actions would not increase that likelihood (it was a choice between a certainty and a possible avoidance).*

And (2) especially after JFK had made specific warnings of grave consequences if they deployed land-based missiles: thus not only warning of a response, but committing himself to it, politically (not only a private warning, which he also made). Another **mystery**: How come no Soviet seems to have urged K to **reconsider** and reject/withdraw the MRBMs (rather than the tac nucs: which could not only have been sent, even openly, and/or concealed effectively, as they were, and then announced) after the JFK warnings and commitments? Why didn't they reconsider that part of the program when JFK's officials made it necessary to lie to them, by pressing them and warning on this very point? (Check dates of arrival in Cuba: **was it really too late to draw back?** Meaning what?)

Why, instead, did K simply speed up the process, on hearing these warnings? He did **not** have to give up his aid to Cuba, his deterrence of US attack; he just had to give up the MRBM component of this, which (like the Turkish missiles) was not only a deterrent but a lightning rod, a nuclear target and a target for preemption (first-strike weapons, not second-strike!)

They were moving toward openly humiliating JFK (by his mistaken predictions and assurances, at least, if not by his inaction, which they hoped for) just before an election! ("How could he do this to me?" "Why?") (Like Ike and British in Suez). Didn't this worry them? Didn't they foresee a strong reaction? (Didn't they understand my crisis pattern? Did K have contempt for JFK, and what he would accept, or not?) Did they consider it at all?

(Was the desire for revenge a factor: for Gilpatric, for backing down on his own threats, for the JFK and McN threats of FS, for the Turkish IRBMs? Had he complained about these, or reproached JFK, in the private correspondence earlier?

HAD HE EXPRESSED HIS FEARS, ANGER, EXPECTATIONS ABOUT AN AMERICAN INVASION OF CUBA, WITH EVIDENCE (E.G. OF MONGOOSE, EXERCISES), AND HIS CONCERN ABOUT THIS, EITHER PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY TO JFK? IF NOT, WHY NOT? HAD CASTRO?

Madoff, Ponzi schemes; counting on dereliction of inspectors, relations with them;

Sub-prime securitization: likewise.

Swaps, etc.: too big to fail. Corzine: governments would not be allowed to default. (True: but his own creditors didn't have equal confidence).



On risk: contrary to most scholars, K **could** have gotten away with it, and it is a mystery why he didn't use tactics he had in his minds (ignored by most analysts: of revealing the operational status of all missiles with warheads, perhaps even delegation: as early as October 14—when Soviets in Cuba knew they had been detected—or between 14-20, or after 23 (when all warheads had arrived). (When did first warheads arrive? I think Oct. 1. Then did MRBMs arrive? COuldn't they have been returned, just like IRBMs?) Didn't K realize that 1) the MRBMs were the particular danger, the provocation to strong US reaction, after the Sept. 4 and Sept. 13 warnings? And (2) that they were not **necessary** to thoroughly sufficient deterrence? (Granted, deterrence was not his only objective; he wanted to even the balance, and to achieve revenge ("give them a taste of their own Turkish medicine")

Note: **SU collaborated with the US on keeping the preparations for US invasion, and Mongoose, secret!** (Just as SU had done the same, with respect to U-2 incursions in SU, before Gary Powers. But then, when they had a SAM, they used it!) Did they not want to reveal their sources? But exercises were not secret! (How, and how much, did they know about assassination attempts?)

Likewise, US feared we were going to lose South Vietnam! Hardly a secret. And feared for Berlin: not a secret. Our threats and actions were overt. Why didn't K make the SU commitment to Cuba overt, an agreement, as Castro wanted and urged? (Another mystery).

These "mysteries" are not just "known unknowns," things I would like to know, could know, and don't (yet) know. It is **hard to imagine** motives, aims, expectations, considerations, that would "make sense" of this behavior for Khrushchev.

11:12 AM (2000 words in 90 minutes; 1320/hr)

Difference between my K/T theory of gambling with catastrophe; and my crisis theory, *faits malaccomplis*. Latter explains why a "crisis" arises: why one party acts more aggressively, more "angrily," than the other had anticipated, creating a crisis for that other (because they had created a crisis for the first, rather than achieving the *fait accompli* they had planned). But the angry response need not be violent (Ike demanding stop to Suez invasion, threatening not to support the pound), or dangerous to the actor (Skybolt). (In C-II, the blockade was dangerous, though not initially violent).

(9-11 had the potential of a great humiliation for Bush: his failure to foresee or forestall it (so egregious as to give rise to strong suspicions he had actually planned or desired it). This seems rarely to be considered: given that he exploited it so effectively. (More of an opportunity than a danger; yet the danger was real, if there had been investigation; if the Democrats hadn't been so coopted into rallying round the leader, in a time of apparent danger at home).

Note the secrets of Cuba, which McGeorge Bundy didn't plan to expose to me (but may have feared that I would find out):

1. Mongoose (like 34A in VN, just two years later)
2. Assassination plans
3. Use of Mafia
4. Invasion plans
5. JFK readiness to concede public trade (McGeorge didn't know himself)
6. JFK secret covert trade
7. Secret channel with Soviets (Bolshakov; letters; RFK/Dobrynin (I did find out)
8. PSALM; and hsr study in August
9. Ultimatum(s)
10. First four above: US provocation of SU move, SU probable aims; implied illegitimacy of US response (and deception of public)
11. Strength of disagreement between JCS and JFK and frustration of JCS/CIA (also in Vietnam; possibly a factor in JFK death a year before my study, along with frustration of Cuban émigrés)
12. JFK as "dove" (along with Stevenson, thrown to wolves by JFK)

(Then there were the secrets on the Soviet side, and the "accidents" and unauthorized actions on the US side, not known to Bundy—or to the other inside students of the crisis in the US: Wainstein, Southard, Sieverts, other CIA. I inferred one of the Soviet secrets: that K hadn't ordered the U-2 shutdown. (And lack of control of Cuban AA. How did I get that?)

PSALM: Did that indicate that if the U-2 discovery had been much closer to the election—say, Oct. 30-Nov. 5—JFK meant to keep it secret through the election, and would have done so? Or that K might have expected this (as I guessed in my study) (just as K had kept U-2 overflights secret so long as he couldn't do anything about them). I supposed in my study that the SU assurances that "We won't do anything to embarrass you before the election" meant much the same as Israel's assurances, "We won't be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East": namely, we won't **announce**



them, force you to recognize the situation and respond to it. We'll keep the secret, for now, if you do.

But JFK, even with PSALM, couldn't keep that secret for three weeks, especially with the JCS all primed to go and the Republicans making it a major issue. K seems simply to have been stupid—wishful?—in believing either that the US would not see the missiles before November or that JFK would not react if he saw them weeks before the election. (But if the SAM had shot down the U-2 on October 14...)

Yet all the Russians went along with it. What did they think would happen? Did none of them foresee catastrophe?! Possible WWII? Or at best, great humiliation? Which of them thought JFK would accept this humiliation?

11/5/11 1:06 PM

Notes on last half of Bernstein, Reconsidering the Cuban Missile Crisis: Turkey...in Nathan, C-II Revisited

(Look up hsr study on SU missiles in Cuba, August 23 -62)

emphasis is entirely on forces which might launch an attack on the US. (NOT on tanks, or troops)

How could we say we couldn't "tolerate" these, given Turkey? (If Turkish missiles had not been removed; and for that matter, given that they had been installed—in 1962!—in the first place!)

Note that possibility of ordering attack on Cuba or invasion is being considered on August 23; clearly a precursor to Oct. 1-2 orders to accelerate plans. "We had no intention..." = LBJ apologists saying later, "We had no intention of attacking NVN in 1964..." (No final order or date had been given). (LBJ could still reject it).

Oct. 10: already a staff memo contrasting SU missiles in Cuba and Turkish missiles; probably stimulated by the intelligence on SU missiles that **led** to the Oct. 14 flight. (Thus, my access to the NRO files—Ideal—revealed that the Oct. 14 flight was preceded by intelligence that seemed solid, contrary to McGeorge Bundy's statement on Meet the Press (?) that same Sunday Oct. 14 about lack of evidence. On Oct. 1, McN (and Nitze?) gets a briefing by DIA claiming that there was evidence of missiles (convincing Nitze? To me. Although Elizabeth Cohn, 323, says Col. Wright claims this was just a hypothesis, a theory). Plans are stepped up that very day and next. (Did warheads arrive on Oct. 1, however?)

McN's rationale for updating plans for attack (**from me!**) includes (Hershberg 255) SU offensive missiles, Oct. 2, to be complete by Oct. 20. (That's why blockade was feasible, so fast; or attack, invasion). Let's assume that JFK and RFK (given assurances from Bolshakov?) were surprised and outraged and (politically) scared (Keating will be next president) on Oct. 16 (Nitze and Rusk were not!). It was **not** because it had seemed unimaginable or extremely unlikely earlier (especially to those unaware of Bolshakov assurances) to administration officials other than McCone; **or** that they had ignored the possibility, failed utterly to plan for it (plans were undertaken very urgently, though secretly: secrecy presumably to keep from seeming to confirm Republican charges, and to be able to surprise the Soviets or Cubans (though see exercises), and to be ready to use them for other reasons of opportunity or urgency, even in the absence of missiles); **or** that they lacked all evidence of the possibility (see August 23 NSAM-181).

September 14 (day after second JFK warning) (p. 253) JFK, MCN, JCS discussed air attack; 27 Sept Air Force approved plans for detailed attack, setting target date of 20 Oct. for completion of preparations. Same target date that McN set on Oct. 1! [Imagine uncovering directives and planning like this for attack on Afghanistan—or Iraq—prior to



9-11!] (Actually, there were comparable warnings, internally, even from CIA: August 2001! But were there military preparations like this?)

JFK was particularly interested in details of attack on SAMs. So he didn't necessarily expect personally to find missiles, though the possibility was explicit. But **readiness** to attack was a presidential and SecDef intention: and by October 20, before election. (Not necessarily for advantage in election, but to avoid a defeat that might have come to loom large between late September and November 6. When did Keating make specific charge missiles were there? (Apparently from Cuban émigrés).

Compare the planning throughout 1964 for widening the war in Vietnam!  
Or throughout 2002 for attack on Iraq (with discussion starting a year before that).

But then, when the contingency arrived—against which JFK had warned “grave consequences”—JFK did NOT attack or invade (though he did start blockade: seemingly “too late,” after missiles had, indeed, arrived (though it was not certain that warheads had). A threat that he might follow this with air attack: though he told Galbraith that “he never had any intention of attacking.” (Douglas) Just as LBJ “never had any intention” of taking actions wanted by the JCS that were likely to bring in the Chinese.

That doesn't mean he had no intention of invading under any circumstances **before** he learned that missiles had arrived and might be operational! (Nor that he had definitely decided to do so). The blockade constituted a threat (bluff) that he might do so; though K was at first relieved, that it wasn't an attack. But K came to worry that JFK would attack...

My guess, as of last night: with the blockade, taking risks and acting illegally, potentially violently (like a “good doctor”: 1964 Bundy), he was showing toughness, prior to negotiating a deal that would otherwise be subject to charge of weakness, appeasement. “Shooting his way out of the saloon”: WPB proposal in 1964, McNamara intent (?) in starting RT in 1965. Nixon with Christmas bombing of Hanoi, prior to Paris Accord in 1973. Countering charge of weakness, and lack of will to shoot to gain victory; laying foundation for claim that the resulting deal was “the best that could have been achieved,” and is the product of adversary's fear and hurt, not one's own weakness and fear. JFK to Stevenson, and RFK to Stevenson: make deal after blockade, not before or simultaneously. (Bernstein, 74) Like Truman and Byrnes: accept emperor after Hiroshima, not before.

Moreover, the shooting not only covers up a willingness to accept terms that some will say are not good enough; it can actually improve the terms somewhat. JFK had to worry that the final deal might call for getting out of Turkey altogether, or out of Italy and UK as well. (It could certainly have called for more guarantees to Cuba, as Castro demanded). **Mystery: Why K did take out tac nucs, without being asked; they weren't offensive, they could deter invasion, JFK didn't ask for it, because he didn't even know they were there (another mystery).**

Just as McN hoped, after RT commenced, for better terms than otherwise (actually, unattainable: de facto partition of SVN, just as Nixon hoped later). WPB: shoot/attack then call for negotiations. McN: No, bomb and let them call for negotiations.

Bernstein 75: the night of Oct. 22, McN was asked in backgrounder (see August 4, 1965) to respond to claim (by who?) that SU was just doing what we had done in Turkey, putting missiles close to territory. McN: no similarity. Turkey was threatened by SU (what?!) Cuba "was not under the threat of nuclear attack, or **attack from this country**." Jesus! Shameless! And he was still saying that, in 1963 and in 1987, 1992 (though by then he was admitting that it was "reasonable" for Cuba to imagine that it was. Yeah.)

77. Supposedly, the CIA and Admin "assumed the worst" and "presumed" that warheads were in Cuba. Really? Then how could they really be preparing for attack or invasion?! (Of course, they didn't know of FROGs/FKR's with warheads). Or Luna warheads.